THE ARAB CIVILIZATION

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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

JOSEPH HELL

BY

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To Sir Thomas Carey Evans—in gratitude for his never-failing encouragement in my efforts, literary and historical—I dedicate these pages.

FOREWORD

Prof. Hell's monograph—*Die Kultur der Araber*—is at once a summing-up and a revaluation of Arab civilization. It is not original, and, as a matter of fact, it claims no originality. Prof. Hell has not added, by his own researches, anything of any significance or value to our knowledge of Arab culture, but, using all available materials, he has told the history of Arab civilization in a short compass, with wide-mindedness, sympathy, clearness of vision. So far as the present writer is aware, there is no such handbook—compact, accurate, felicitous in diction, and sound in judgment—to be found in any language, Eastern or Western; and, for this reason, precisely, he has undertaken its translation into English—a language more widely read than any other in the world. The English translation, he hopes, will serve a two-fold purpose. On the one hand it will afford the student of Islamic History a basis for further and extended study, and, on the other, it will bring to those interested in the past of Islam and curious about its future, knowledge at once accurate and sufficient for guidance and enlightenment. Nor is the history of Islam a negligible quantity in our days of surging ambitions, restless activities, widespread political transformations in Islamic lands.

To those who have the time or the inclination, such guides as Von Kremer, Sedillot, Viardot, Muller, Braun, Becker, and, last but not least, Mez (whose *Renaissance des Islams* is a triumph of patient industry) are always at hand, ready to lead them into the promised land. But for those not specially intent upon a minute or exhaustive study, they are a trifle too long and tedious, and therefore perhaps not altogether attractive. In the monograph lying before us Prof. Hell has

combined accuracy with brevity, and has thus sought to satisfy the needs and to meet the wishes alike of the student, the scholar and the layman, all anxious to know, yet perchance without the leisure for a protracted study.

Deep as is Prof. Hell's obligation to his forerunners in this branch of learning, his presentation of the subject is distinctly and characteristically his own. This fact is well attested by the first and the last chapters of this book (Chapters I and VI). In the first chapter Prof. Hell deals with *Arabia before Islam*—a subject still, to a certain extent, full of controversial points, doubts, uncertainties, even apparently insoluble mysteries. But, with a sure hand, he lifts the veil, laying before his reader a clear, coherent, consistent picture of a far-off age.

The hoary antiquity of South Arabia is established. Its religious and political institutions, its artistic and architectural creations, its social and domestic life, are excellently sketched, and vividly described, and its importance in the History of Arabia is assessed and determined.

On the rise of Mekka Prof. Hell has something new to tell. "Hijaz, even in pre-Islamite times," says he, "was the centre of the religious life of the Arabs. As everywhere a large concourse of men takes place, so here trade throve. And, as a natural accompaniment of trade, the most delightful feature of the *Umra* and the *Hajj* was the great annual market held in the sacred neighbourhood. Here Arab life and activity reached their culminating point . . . . Whoever wished to make a name in Arabia could do so here in the markets of Hijaz; in Uqaz, in Dhul Majas, in Mekka. When the market was over, Dhul Majas and Uqaz became empty and lost their importance. Mekka, however, developed into an important town, and, after the fall of the Himyarite rule in South Arabia, became the most flourishing city of Arabia. This pre-eminence it secured, not by its sanctuary— for every market-place had its own; not even by its fair—for other

places had fairs too ; still less by its geographical position—for it lay in an inclement, barren basin. To what, then, must we ascribe this ascendancy of Mekka ? To the intellectual superiority of the Quraish, as Julius Wellhausen has conclusively proved. Happy relations with the Northern Semites—particularly the Jewish element—may have influenced the intellectual awakening of the Mekkans. Commerce, which extended to Syria, to Al-Hira, to South Arabia, certainly brought fresh stimulus and aspiration to them. Thus it was that, amongst the men who could read and write before Islam, a proportionately large number were Mekkans. We would, perhaps, have hesitated unconditionally to credit this information had we not known that Mohamed's first wife—trained in pre-Islamic days—carried on an extensive commerce of her own throughout the whole of Arabia. In spite of a lack of official organization, in matters of common concern we find, according to Wellhausen, a clear-sighted public spirit in Mekka, such as existed nowhere else in Arabia. Although every family was essentially autonomous, yet the interest of the town was placed first and foremost. *There—there was the authority.* The beginnings of a real town-organization are manifest ; simple and small indeed, but none the less very remarkable in Arabia."

But if the first chapter captivates us with its enticing facts and details, illustrating the part that the Arabs played in antiquity, the civilization they evolved, the culture they attained, the foundation they laid for the glories *then* undreamed of, the sixth holds us spell-bound with the history of their achievements in art and architecture, where, imperishably inscribed in marble and stone, are the records of their deathless artistic genius.

One feature of Arab culture stands out in specially bold relief. While its broad and broadening culture never opposed extraneous influences—in fact, welcomed them with open arms and generous enthusiasm—the Arabs were never servile

imitators of foreign models. They possessed a will, a mind, a marked capacity of their own, which impressed its individual stamp on all they received or borrowed from without. Persian art captured their imagination; Byzantine art laid its spell upon them; yet even the Omayyad buildings show deviations and departures from their Hellenistic models, indicating thereby the rise of a new, original art, purely Islamic. And this is true of every sphere of activity which engaged their attention, or occupied their mind.

Here, in this chapter, Spanish, Egyptian, Syrian, North African monuments of art pass before us—rapid, vivid, dumb like a dream, with their wealth of artistic details, overwhelming us with a sense of beauty and grandeur, absolutely inexpressible in words.

"The wealth of surface decoration," says Prof. Hell, "seems but poor compensation for the absence of plastic art; and for this we hold the religion of Islam responsible. But we are wrong. Recent excavation work on the desert palaces of Kusair Amra and Meschatta, discloses Islam, in the earliest times, under the Omayyads, as unable to check the artistic representations of living beings. In Egypt, men and animals are depicted in the wood-carvings of Muristan. We also know that in the palaces of the Fatimides animals of all kinds formed part of the designs on carpets and vessels. Persia never stayed her hand from representing living beings. The Islam of today has quickly come to terms with photography and portrait-painting, and recently even with statues in bronze. Even Alhambra did not dispense with human figures. The representation of the 'ten kings' and the hunting and the tournament scenes in the room next to the *Salle de la Justice* have long been known. Some years ago, under the plaster wainscoting of the walls in the *Torr de las Damas*, a large number of figures of Arabs was discovered. If the plastic arts did not play a great part in the art of Islam, it was not due to any religious scruples, but to the absence of all need for such activities."

These two chapters—the first and the last—are finished literary and historical pieces, gathering within their fold the latest results of exacting scholarship.

The chapter on the Prophet calls for a passing notice here. Appreciative on the whole as it is, it completely misjudges the Prophet at Medina. Prof. Hell has fallen into the popular Christian error which sees in the Mohamed in Medina a sinister politician, or a grasping despot, intent on purely selfish aims, and oblivious of his high calling. I will repeat here what I have already said in a note at the end of that chapter. "I would specially refer the reader to Dr. Krehl's *Mohamed* (Leipzig, 1884), and to Dr. Arnold's *Preaching of Islam* (Constable, 1913). Both these works combine scholarship with sympathy, and throughout show an understanding rare in European writers. To both of these scholars Mohamed is a genuine Prophet of God, full of divine ecstasy, bent on fulfilling his divine mission. Dr. Arnold (p. 34) has exposed the popular Christian fallacy which sees two diametrically different persons in the Mohamed of Mekka and the Mohamed of Medina. Dr. Krehl's life is one continuing tribute to the undeviating zeal of the Prophet. Dr. Arnold's book should be more widely read and Dr. Krehl's should be made accessible to those who know no German."

The chapters on *Muslim Conquest* and the *Omayyads of Damascus* are accurate, suggestive and well-written.

Once queen of the Islamic Empire, the centre of commerce, the focus of science and arts, the home of fashion, the nursery of music and song, Baghdad shines forth in Prof. Hell's monograph, full of grace and light and loveliness. All its many-sided activities are touched upon, the city itself is unearthed from the dust, and is reinvested with its resplendent glory. I shall let the reader read for himself; but one or two observations I propose to make here.

To me the most striking feature of the Arab mind is its daring and courage to face facts—to accept nothing which was

not supported and established by actuality—to enthrone reason in the place of fancy, and to carry out reason to its legitimate conclusion—whatever that conclusion may be. This note of intellectual freedom is all the more amazing and striking, as theirs was the Age of Faith, of blind acceptance of things, of unquestioning submission.

Abu Musa Jabir Ibn Hayyan—the famous Muslim chemist—says : " Hearsay and mere assertion have no authority in chemistry. It may be taken as an absolutely rigorous principle that any proposition which is not supported by proofs is nothing more than an assertion which may be true or false. It is only when a man brings proofs of his assertion that we say, 'Your proposition is true.' "

And this is no uncommon spirit. It manifests itself in domains as wide apart as religion and science. The entire Arab mind was imbued with it, and to it we must ascribe that spirit of tolerance, that large outlook, that craving for learning, that restless ambition to extend wider and yet wider the frontier of knowledge, which so distinguish Muslim mentality.

Islam encouraged this noble ambition, and stimulated this lofty purpose. Did not the Prophet say : " He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God until his return home." And yet again : " God makes easy the path of paradise to him who journeys for the sake of knowledge."

With justice does Sédillot say : " What characterized the school of Baghdad from its inception was its scientific spirit. Proceeding from the known to the unknown ; taking precise account of celestial phenomena ; accepting nothing as true which is not confirmed by experience, or established by experiment—such were the fundamental principles taught and acclaimed by the then masters of the sciences."

Equally warm is the tribute paid by Draper to the Arabs : " The Arab," says he, " has impressed his intellectual stamp upon Europe, and not in too remote a future will

Christendom concede this truth. He has left unfading traces of his finger on the sky, which every one can see who reads the names of the stars on an ordinary celestial globe."

At length has this subject been discussed in the chapter entitled : *Wissenschaft und Literatur*, in the second volume of Von Kremer's *Culturgeschichte des Orients*,* and to it I refer the reader.

There is one thing which Prof. Hell has not done. He has not accounted for the collapse of a civilization which united striking material prosperity with distinctive intellectual greatness, which stood out for light amidst deep and deepening darkness, which was a beacon unto its own and succeeding ages, and which, at one time, seemed, like Roman civilization, firmly planted, secure of permanence, scornful of the waves of time.

The success of Islam was mainly due to the all-consuming religious fervour of the early Muslims. It was the one force which uplifted them, sustained them, and made them irresistible in their onward march. To religious fervour were wedded patriotic sentiments and national pride. The Muslim State was as much a religious as a political institution. The Arab warrior of the first century who fought undaunted unto death for his people and his faith was swayed equally by religious sensibility and old-inherited national pride. But gradually these forces slackened and spent themselves. As a direct consequence of contact with foreigners, national pride vanished—leaving naught but the religious tie as the one and only bond uniting the immense brotherhood of Islam. But lively intellectual activities, rise of religious sects, disturbing doubts and scepticism, political chaos—these loosened even the one remaining tie of a common faith. But while these bonds loosened and fell, the political situation became darker and more dismal, and the twofold scourge

*I have translated this entire chapter in my *Studies*: *Indian and Islamic*.

of famine and pestilence more and more frequent and violent.

The Caliphate, in the meantime, was steadily splitting up into fragments. Political cohesion perished, sense of unity vanished. Each individual state had but one end in view, one purpose to serve ; namely, to enrich itself at the cost of the people. Thus catastrophic consequences ensued from the disintegration of the Empire into numerous half and full sovereign states. In the days of the single Empire there were, of course, no customs-barriers. Commerce was everywhere free. The new states, however, began altering this. Customs and tolls sprang up everywhere. This naturally hampered free intercourse which had formerly rendered the Empire so prosperous. Even the pettiest provincial dynasty strove to increase its revenue. New taxes were imposed and consumption duties (*mokus*), unknown to the old administrative Law of Islam, were levied.* Also transit-tolls—thus hampering trade and raising prices. The rural population was mercilessly ground to the dust. A few examples will suffice. The Aghlabides soon managed to convert the governorship of Africa into a hereditary kingship, independent of the Caliph—stopping even the annual tribute payable to Baghdad. Of a ruler of this dynasty we are told that he raised the land-tax to 18 *dinars* (180 francs) for every *feddan* (*feddan*, in modern Egypt, is equivalent to 4500 square metres)—an amount wholly beyond the capacity of the tenant to pay.

That elsewhere matters were no more cheerful is proved by a report regarding the Hamadanides, who ruled North Syria and a portion of Mesopotamia. The town of Nisibin formed part of their dominion. Most happily situated in an exceedingly fertile plain, abundantly watered by neighbouring mountain springs and artificial canals it possessed immense gardens, plantations, cultivable lands. Under early Arab rule the town largely retained its former

*See Von Kremer, Vol. II, last chapter.

prosperity, and numerous cloisters in its environs continued unmolested. One hundred thousand *dinars* (about a million francs) was the tax payable to the Central Government. But in the year 360 A.H. a change took place. The prince within whose dominion Nisibin lay so overloaded it with taxes and imposts that the Arab tribe of Banu Habib—quite a large body of men—despite the fact that they were related to the ruling Hamadanide family—resolved to migrate and take shelter in Byzantine Empire. Thus, with their families, their cattle, their shining arms and weapons—riding on fine chargers—they left their homes and went over to the Byzantine territory. Without one single exception (some twelve thousand men) they embraced the Christian faith.

By kind treatment the Byzantine Emperor sought to attach them to him. To them, therefore, lands were granted and concessions were made. To those that remained behind the migrants wrote of their good luck and kind treatment, with the result that many more joined them. To avenge the oppression they had endured they undertook predatory expeditions in Muslim lands, and captured some important fortifications, such as Hisn Mansur and Hisn Ziyad, and besieged Kafr Tuta and Dara. Every year, at harvest time, these incursions were repeated. They went even as far as Nisibin and beyond, to Jezirat-i-Ibn Omar, Ras-al-Ain, Bilas and further still.

Intolerable must have been the position to induce a whole tribe thus to abandon their homes and to migrate to a foreign country; nay, even to change their faith—at a time, too, when Islam proudly looked down upon the degenerate Christianity of the Byzantines.

To show that this was not isolated case, but merely one instance out of the many financial exploitations then in fashion, I shall cite a passage from the diary of the Spanish traveller, Ibn Jubair, who describes with indignation, how the pilgrims, on their arrival in Alexandria, were cruelly oppressed by the

Egyptian customs officers. He tells us that, even before they disembarked, Government officers boarded the ship, took down the names of every single pilgrim, and most mercilessly exacted the poor-tax (*Zakat*) from them. Then they brought the pilgrims and their luggage to land, and most minutely examined everything. In the confusion that followed many of these unfortunates lost their belongings. He adds that the just Saladin who then ruled Egypt would surely have ended such malpractices had he been informed of them. In another passage he tells us that this very prince actually removed the pilgrim-tax which had formerly been collected in the harshest manner at Aidab—the seaport on the Red Sea, whence the pilgrims embarked for Jedda. This tax meant 7½ Egyptian *dinars* per head—about 75 francs. He who was unable to pay suffered the cruellest punishment. Even in other places pilgrims were systematically exploited and were looked upon as welcome objects of taxation.

Nothing is more frequent in the geography of later times —when a town is mentioned—than the addition of the words: *It is now for the most part desolate and in decay.* The taxes were collected with savage severity. Those who fell into arrears had to carry heavy stones round their necks, or to stand in the scorching sun, or to suffer tortures in other equally cruel and ingenious ways.

The magnates of the Empire abused their position by unconscionable profiteering. They either took leases of entire districts from the Government, and systematically drained and impoverished them, or they carried on usurious trade in corn, thereby raising the prices of food-stuffs. The military fiefs did the rest in destroying the prosperity of the masses.

But this was not all. To the financial exploitations—oppressive taxes and tolls—were superadded plagues and epidemics of a fierce and devastating kind. Nor were famines absent. In the course of four centuries forty great epidemics ravaged the Islamic lands. No less than twenty-two—that

is more than half—either began at or visited Iraq. Twelve times was Syria victimized, and in Iraq—pre-eminently in the town of Basra, situated at the mouth of the Tigris, at Kufa, Wasit, and finally Baghdad—the pestilence raged oftenest and fiercest. The loss of manhood meant neglect of land and cultivation. A great deal of land was thus left fallow and unattended.

Famine and scarcity joined hands with plague and pestilence, shattering the social and economic life of the people, destroying their intellectual activities, ruining their well-being for ever.

With the religious sense weakened and patriotic feelings gone—with numerous semi or full sovereign states independent of the Caliphate, and perpetually at war with each other—with the most cruel system of financial exploitation in full force, unrelieved by one single ray of charity or clemency—with the scourge of famine and plague visiting alternately or in combination—life and vitality steadily ebbed away from the Empire of Islam. The Muslim world bowed to the inevitable—fell into a state of hopeless torpor—and thus, listless, apathetic, it continued until the Crusades, when, all of a sudden, it momentarily flamed, flashed, faded. Into torpor, however, once again it relapsed. Since then till the nineteenth century, Islam sleeps the sleep of death. It is then aroused afresh, quickened into new life by the vigorous impact of Western influences.

The Arab civilization ends, but a new era dawns for Islam. Islam, today, is as full of life and vigour and vitality as it was in its early conquering days. There is something eternal, all-conquering in Islam—something which defies the assaults of Time.

Equipping themselves with modern sciences—training themselves in the schools of Western arts and letters—patiently learning what the West calls the "bloodless battle of diplomacy"—perfecting themselves by the experiences of

others—seizing upon the permanent as opposed to the transitory elements in their religion—the Muslims all over the world are up and doing—determined to win an honoured place in the federation of the world.

The Arab civilization will assuredly be followed by a yet greater and ampler civilization—the civilization of Islam—eclectic in its principles—world-embracing in its range—developing the sense of nationality and yet preserving the ineffable brotherhood of the faith.

My grateful thanks are due to Mr. H. B. Hannah and Mr. A. A. Patterson for very kindly revising the proofs, and to Dr. P. Bruhl for helping me with passages of doubt or difficulty in the text.

Khuda Bakhsh Library
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S. Khuda Bakhsh

CHAPTER I

ARABIA BEFORE ISLAM

NECESSITY is the source of much of human civilization. In man, at different stages of his evolutional progress, exists a craving for enjoyment, for power, for beauty, for truth; and boundless, indeed, is this craving. The effort to compass and satisfy it is the mainspring of human progress and development. The ideal lies behind a mass of definite individual needs; and only when these have been met with and satisfied does the prospect widen far afield. This is the way of all civilizations. New needs spell new aims—to strive for the satisfaction of those needs may be called the capacity for civilization—to fulfil and attain them may be regarded as civilization itself. So, the history of the civilization of a people is the history of its growing needs or ideals, and of the attempt to satisfy those needs and to realize those ideals.

From this point of view we propose to treat early Arab civilization and its mission. Not that we regard Islamic civilization as an indigenous creation, or even look upon the Arabs as its principal exponents. But among them, undoubtedly, arose the idea of the *oneness* of Islamic culture, embracing all Muslim peoples, and capable of extension beyond.

When we look at the modern Arabs we find it difficult to believe in their civilizing mission. Like Arabia itself—probably the least explored country of the earth—its people, shut off from the world, are the most isolated and least accessible of mankind. Split up into a number of hostile tribes—leading a nomadic life, and given to mutual plunder—scarcely touched by the spirit of Islam—and held together by a slender political tie—the inhabitants of Inner Arabia appear

to be a people without any want or outlook—destined to pursue the self-same path for ever.

And yet these were the very people whose ancestors, in the seventh century of the Christian era, swept like a flood over the ancient world, and stepped out, *not for the first time* to be sure, on to the stage of world history. Modern research shows Arabia as holding a distinctive position in the history of the old Near East.

That Arabia was the original home of the Semites is an opinion shared by many—and, indeed, not without good reason; that the old civilized Babylonia, as early as the beginning of the third millennium before Christ, received its ruling population from Arabia is another widespread belief; and innumerable inscriptions on the Arabian rocks testify to a civilization and a settled government there in pre-Christian times—not in any way inferior to any civilization and government of the then age.

The surprise caused by these beliefs vanishes when we closely consider the topographical peculiarities of Arabia, and remember that the peninsula consists, not only of deserts and steppes, but also of exceedingly fertile country, cultivated for thousands of years, studded with thriving villages and towns, and inhabited by settled populations. Such fertile territories were principally along the borders of the peninsula. In the south-west was Yemen, called even in antiquity, "Arabia Felix." In the south was Hadramaut, the home of incense, highly prized in the remote past. In the east, on the Persian Gulf, was what we now call the fertile coast-land of Al-Hasa; and with but some slight breaks the entire east coast was well-cultivated land. Rough and rugged and hilly was the country on the western coast. It has excellent pasture land even now, but in those far off days it was better still. As for the Central Arabian highland of Najd, with its isolated mountains, its long stream valleys, the so-called *Wadis*, its steppes on which grazed the best Arabian horses, and Yamama, lying south-

east, the central granary of Arabia—these, in the sixth and the seventh centuries were, on the whole, cultivated just as well as many parts of contemporary Europe—in some places even better.

True, along with these cultivated tracts with their settled populations, there was that wholly infertile and inhospitable stretch of land—useless for any kind of existence for want of water—which we invariably associate with Arabia, namely, the Desert. And it was unfortunate that these *nefuds* lay so sandwiched between the fertile tracts that the latter were wholly or almost wholly isolated from one another. Thus the greatest and the most terrible of the Arabian deserts—the Roba-el-Khaly*—so squeezes and hems in the people living along the south-east, south and south-western coast, that no communication is possible between them and Central Arabia; with the result that the people of the south-east (Oman) and of the south (Mahra)—little affected by the fate of Inner Arabia—proceeded on their own independent line of development.

To the dividing frontiers of the desert in the east and of Tehma in the west—the burning sand girdle by the sea—is to be ascribed the separate existence which the south-western portion of Arabia led for some thousand years, away and apart from the rest of Arabia. Its power and influence was so widely extended, for a while, that we must give to this oldest part of Arab culture a detailed consideration. Numerous inscriptions which, during the last seventy years, have been found on the ruins in South Arabia and which have been more and more thoroughly investigated (though not yet exhaustively), tell us of the existence of two kingdoms there in pre-Christian times. The long-maintained view that the two kingdoms continued, side by side, till the late Grecian Period

* Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, p. 524, Vol. II., Roba-el-Khaly (the empty quarter). By this is commonly understood the great Middle-East of the Arabian peninsula, which is believed to be void of the breath of life!

is no longer sustainable in the face of the researches of Edward Glaser, which show that the kingdom of Ma'in was destroyed and absorbed by that of Saba.* Although there is no unanimity yet as to the ages of the two kingdoms, it will not be rash to trace back the kingdom of Ma'in to the second millennium before Christ, for the conditions of life continued there unaltered for thousands of years. Speaking of this kingdom, the oldest reports refer to its special indigenous produce—incense and myrrh—highly valued in Egypt—and to its felicitous position on the Red Sea, marking it, from time immemorial, as a commercial centre. We know, further, how it extended, its sphere of influence up to Gaza on the Mediterranean, and how, all along right up to the sea, commercial stations and depots for storage of arms dotted the route. In all these respects the kingdom of Saba is scarcely distinguishable from that of Ma'in ; only the former assumes

*The theor that the rule of the Minaean kings preceded that of the Sabaean (and also that of the so-called Priest-kings) presupposes a much earlier date for the Minaean—1200-700 B.C. at the latest. Lately, however, the hypothesis of contemporaneity has been again defended by several scholars, particularly by Martin Hartmann and Eduard Meyer. But Hartmann now admits that the golden age of the Minaean kingdom preceded that of the Sabaean ; yet he holds that the oldest Minaean and Sabaean inscriptions are contemporary. At the most it may be admitted that the oldest Sabaean inscriptions may have been contemporary with the latest Minaean.

The Minaean kings for the protection of their incense trade, possessed a colony in the land of Midian ; which is called Musran in the inscriptions ; a fact directly verified by the discovery of Minaean inscriptions in Al-ula (El-ola) by Euting. After the collapse of the Minaean kingdom (about 650 B.C.) the Sabaeans were probably the heirs of the Midianitic colony of the Minaeans, as we infer from the passages in the Old Testament. But already other Powers made themselves felt about this period in North-west Arabia. Everything is in favour of the view that the Libyanites were the successors in North-west Arabia of the Minaeo-Sabaeans, and the predecessors of the Nabataeans, and that they are, therefore, to be placed about 500-300 B.C. The Nabataean kingdom was brought to an end in 106 A.D. by the Romans. Two other kingdoms might be referred to here—those of the Lakhamids and of the Jafanids. The former was installed by the Persians on the old Babylonian-Arabian frontier, and the latter by the Byzantines in the land east of Jordan. Both were overthrown by Islam.—*Ency. of Islam*, *sub*. Arabia, Vol. I , pp. 377-379.

greater and greater prominence about the time when the position of the south-western portion of Arabia was becoming shaky and insecure in the world of commerce. The boat-service introduced by the Ptolemies on the Red Sea did but little harm to the commercial interests of the Sabaeans in the north, for they continued as before (an inscription dating from the time of the Ptolemies proves this) to supply incense to all the great temples in Egypt. World-renowned was the wealth of Saba. Against the General of the Roman Emperor Augustus—Aelius Gallus—it made a bold and successful stand. After an initial success, he had to retire from the walls of Marib.

But gradually Saba sank from its exalted position. We are unable to account for its decline and fall, but the Arabs seem to connect it with the bursting of the dam of Marib. Even after this decline, the south-western corner of Arabia came most in contact with the foreign powers who felt kindly disposed towards it. Here the greatest civilized powers of the age came into close quarters with each other, and sought to win the land over to the culture which each represented.

The Abyssinians—who, since the fourth century A.D., had accepted Christianity and had received support from the Byzantine Empire—were the first to rule this land. Against their domination both the Arab heathen and the very numerous Jews of South Arabia united. About 520 A.D. we find it under the rule of the Jewish king Abu Nawas. Precisely as the Christian Abyssinian rulers sought alliance with the Byzantines, so the Arab-Jewish Government sought the protection of the Persians—the then great pagan power. In the war which now broke out Christianity triumphed, and South Arabia became afresh an Abyssinian province. The Persians, however, never lost sight of this rich portion of Arabia, and in 570 A.D. they felt that the time had come for an attack upon Yemen. In shining array the Arab folk—embittered against the Christian Government—joined the Persian army, and thus, for the

second time, the Abyssinians were driven out of South Arabia. South Arabia now received a Persian Governor, and was taxed according to the Persian system. But as the Persians were more eager for a share in the wealth of the land than bent on setting up an oppressive rule, the inhabitants felt satisfied with the new order of things. Nevertheless, it meant loss of national honour.

South Arabia was thus the gateway through which the two world powers—the Eastern Empire and Persia —entered into the Arabian peninsula. In the north the Syro-Arabian Desert barred their passage, but there was no such hindrance in the south. Despite, however, close contact and the capacity of the South Arabians to assimilate culture—these powers failed to impress their stamp upon the South Arabian civilization. What civilization we find there, is their own unaffected indigenous civilization.

But exceedingly fragmentary, unfortunately, is our knowledge of that civilization. What we do know, however, is sufficient to assure us of the fact of its existence there ; but, as regards its rise, growth, and extent, we can only look forward to future researches for light and information.

Judging from contemporary standards it is clear that the Arabs—when we first meet them in history—were by no means wild, savage people. We find them living in a network of tribal organization in which the individual always reckoned upon the protection of his tribe. The gathering of a number of tribes round one which had become specially powerful, led to the oldest kind of State-formation, but it did not involve the loss of tribal consciousness. In such a system the king held the first rank. On the gradual growth of the royal power, again, our light is scant and fitful. With good reason we may assume that, in the earliest times, the royal power was allied with priestly functions, and that its influence over the people, at its inception, was practically based on personal prestige and personal distinction. Only in the late

Sabaean period emerged into prominence the conception of a king as the feudal overlord of his subjects. Thenceforward we notice kings owning vast landed estates, which they grant as fiefs: issuing coins of gold, silver and copper, with their images on one side, and different emblems on the other (such as those of owls, bull-heads, etc. etc.). But these very coins, which have come down to us in considerable numbers, reveal to us afresh our ignorance of the development of their civilization. On the one hand they suggest a great dependence upon Greek, and, later on, on Roman patterns—on the other the images of the kings, the peculiarity of the coinage, the artistic sense of the designs, proclaim an independent development of the South Arabians themselves—however limited that development may be. In the old Arabian fashion these coins show the kings, with long, loose, descending hair ; next, in long curled locks of hair ; and, finally, with hair cropped short after the style of the Roman Emperors. Unmistakable also is the development in artistic skill. But it is singular that while the oldest coins show a relatively high finish and sureness of design, notably in details—and are on almost the same level as the latest ones—those that fall in between the two periods betray a sad lack of artistic power and skill. In sooth, however, the technique of coinage remained imperfect at all times.

A fitful light, like that cast on the institution of kingship by the coins, is shed on religion from another source. The numerous names of gods inscribed in the South Arabian inscriptions might indicate great importance attached to religion there. We know, indeed, nothing certain as regards the outward shape or the essential attributes of these gods, except that they were made of stone. From the contents of the countless prayers, vows, thanksgivings, it seems that the South Arabians believed as little in a life after death as in spiritual blessings. When, therefore, Pliny reports that incredibly large was the number of temples in South Arabia, he offers us a

proof more of the powers of the priestcraft and of artistic tendencies of a certain kind than of the deep religious piety of the South Arabians.

In South-western Arabia we encounter works of art earliest in point of time. It supplied for building purposes granite, porphyry and marble. Besides the materials which the country offered—the close proximity of the plundering Beduins pressed home to the people the necessity of well-fortified dwelling-places. Thus South Arabia became a land of castles and citadels, and is rich in such ruins.* The twenty-storey high castle of Ghomdam in San'a; the temple of Marib, whose walls, ellipse-like, encircled a natural elevation and reached a height of 9½ metres; again the immense dam of Marib—the remains of which are still visible—these are so many witnesses of the high architectural development of the South Arabians. These buildings demonstrate proportion and immensity, but proofs of the South Arabian sense of form we find in monuments of a very different kind. The oldest known inscriptions on the South Arabian rocks go back to the tenth century before Christ. They astonish us by their symmetry and clearness of script. Moreover, many of them are adorned with manifold artistic ornamentations. We are, therefore, inclined to believe that the Arab geographer Hamadani reports regarding the ornamentations of the facades of the temples and castles in South Arabia.

"You see," says Hamadani, "figures of all kinds sketched on them: wild and ravening animals—eagles with flapping wings and vultures pouncing on hares—herds of gazelles hurrying to their death-trap, dogs with drooping ears, partly leashed and partly loose, and a man, with a whip, amidst horses."

We come across the best specimens of South Arabian architecture, however, not in Yemen and Hadramaut, but on

*See Mrs. Stewart Erskine's *Vanished Cities of Arabia*—a fascinating book.

the edge of the Syrian desert in North Arabia, amidst the mountain chains of Hauran, whither, for economic reasons, a portion of the South-Arabian people migrated.

Since remote times North Arabia also had its State-formations, but we hardly know anything more than the mere names of the oldest of them : Musur, Mijan, Meluch. In consequence of mutual rivalry these little States perished before Christ. In their place two other kingdoms attained a high position as commercial centres : the kingdom of the Nabatanans which pushed its frontier from 200 to 100 B C deep into the interior of Arabia ; and, after its fall, the kingdom of Palmyra, which was only destroyed in 271 A.D. by the Emperor Aurelian.

When we hear of a real Arab State of the kings of Lihjan, or when an inscription of 328 A.D. speaks of Imra-ul-Qais as one "who bore the diadem and ruled both Azad and Nizar" —we must not imagine that Arabia, about that time, was actually organized into a State, but merely that people coming into touch with the civilizations of the north-east and north-west followed their fashion and adopted their titles.

We shall now pass on to the two States on the borders of North Arabia, which we notice shortly before the rise of Mohamed, and which stood facing the Persian and the Byzantine Empires. The long, narrow strip of land facing the Persian Empire was called the kingdom of Hira. It has been painted by poetry and fiction in rich colours. Doubtless it was a home of culture—but hardly Arabian culture—rather a culture representing in all essentials, Persian culture.

Facing the Byzantine Empire was the Arab-Christian State of the Ghassanides. It had no permanent capital, but a permanent camp, which was its centre of activity. Its chiefs were called *Phylarks* by the Byzantines, and kings by the Arabs. However defective the organization of these States, their importance in the history of Arabia cannot be ignored. These two-border States were in the pay of the two

neighbouring Powers, and, as such, they took active part in the endless fights between the Persian and Byzantine Empires. Thus in the alternating fortunes of war they came to know the weaknesses of these powerful neighbours, as also the wealth and splendour of their cities. Riches have always exercised a mighty spell over the Arabs, and it was the main business of these buffer States to stay the overflow of the Arab hordes across the frontier in quest of gold. Even in pre-Islamite times this was attempted. In the second half of the fifth century the powerful tribe of Kinda--having its seat in Central Arabia—succeeded to a kind of overlordship over other tribes. It formed a confederacy—of a very simple sort to be sure—under the leadership of its kings. In 480 A.D. one such king—Hajar—made an unsuccessful attack upon Hira. But this failure was compensated by the successful invasion of Palestine by Al-Harith in 496 A.D. and the payment of the Roman Emperor of a heavy sum to get rid of him from there. Encouraged by his success this very Al-Harith sought, now, to take Hira by storm, but he was not strong enough to cope with the situation. Fortune forsook him, the Kindites deserted him, and in 529 he met his death at the hands of his enemies. The confederacy of Kinda then lost its weight and importance. Thus, at the beginning of the seventh century Central Arabia was not even externally organized as a State. This makes it all the more remarkable that precisely that portion of Arabia which was wholly uninfluenced by the neighbouring civilizations should be the issuing-point of the great Islamic movement. That the real propelling cause was not religious but economical is now pretty well acknowledged. But its details are still obscure and unknown. An ingenious theory explains the dessication of Arabia as the cause of the Arabian *Volkerwanderung*. Whatever may be the causes which, in conjunction with the rise of Islam, led to the world-historical revolution, the conditions of Inner Arabia, favourable to Islam—according to our present knowledge—may be thus summarized.

Corresponding to the double nature of the country, its inhabitants fall into two groups : the settled and the nomadic. The contrast between the two, however, is not very acute. In many things the townsfolk betray their nomadic origin, and share the striking characteristics of the Beduins. For instance, to suit the changing season, it is not rare for settled cultivators and even townsfolk to migrate and wander from one place to another. On the other hand, the nomads are no mere gypsies who roam about for the sheer love of roaming. The lands which they occupy with their herds are always selected on account of their fertility and good pasturage. And wherever arable land is found in the great steppes, there the nomadic cultivators settle, and similarly, wherever a rich spring draws the shepherd and the caravan, there gradually grows up a market-place, a village, even a town. In spite, therefore, of the absence of a political organization there were in Central Arabia large towns and villages whose inhabitants, like the nomads, cherished tribal ties and upheld tribal rights.

Simple, indeed, were the legal ideas of the Beduin : the first and foremost was his right to personal freedom ; and this, notwithstanding the tie of kinship which united the individual to a family, to a tribe, to the South or to the North-Arabian group. Since time immemorial the struggle for existence in Arabia has centred round water and pasturage. These struggles destroyed the sense of national unity, and developed an incurable *particularism* ; each tribe deeming itself self-sufficient, and regarding the rest as its legitimate victims for murder, robbery and plunder. Rarely did they compound murder with *wergeld*—100 female camels. Usually they called for the blood of the offender, and when excitement became particularly great the blood-revenge extended even to the members of the entire tribe to which the offender belonged. If the struggle for existence split the Beduins up into fragments and made them hostile to each other, the common fight against stubborn and malignant Nature drew them closer together ;

and the result was the *one* duty which the old Beduins acknowledged and which they carried to a fault—hospitality.

Not unlike the oldest South and North-Arabian States which waxed and waned with the rise and fall of commerce—in Central Arabia, too, commerce accompanied culture and civilization. The Arabs always had a passion for aromatics, and they imported these in great abundance—particularly musk—from India. From India also, *via* Aden, came the best swords, and from Ethiopia, by ship, came slaves. In addition to the import of these articles which were distributed to all parts of Arabia, there was a heavy inland trade in native goods. South Arabia supplied superfine leather and valuable materials for dress. North Arabia supplied corn and weapons. At Al-Hira flourished a saddle industry. But how was trade possible amidst plunder and feud ? And, how, again, in view of the territorial peculiarity of Arabia, where between cultivated lands the desert intervened making intercourse difficult, and well-nigh impossible ? Against the perils of insecurity the Arabs—from time immemorial—sought and found a remedy *in the introduction of a holy truce*. While eight months were allotted to the savage sport of feuds, four were set apart for complete peace and cessation of hostilities. Of these four months, three followed in unbroken succession—the eleventh, the twlfth and the first month of the year—the fourth fell in the middle of the year and called a sudden halt to strife. While the three successive months of the peace were reserved for religion, the fourth was set apart for commerce. For the one as for the other purpose the Beduins of Arabia came to the inhospitable but none the less easily accessible Hijaz ; for Hijaz was accessible alike from the south, from the north, and from the west. Every tribe, in its own territorial limits, had one or several holy stones, trees or springs—sufficient to satisfy its modest religious needs. But as far back as memory can go, Hijaz has served as a meeting-place of many tribes, and as such the sacred things there have borne the same rela-

tion as local things do to things national. This may well have been the reason why a black stone in Mekka, set up in a cube-shaped building, called the Kaba, acquired a more and more spreading reputation, and the ceremonies connected therewith and the rest of the sacred things in Mekka a wider and wider recognition.* The result, in the end, was that the performances of these ceremonies—the *Umra* of Mekka—came to be regarded as an inviolable duty in a large portion of Arabia. In the valley of Arafa some miles north-east of Mekka, in Muzdalifa two hours' journey from Arafa, and in Mina two hours' journey further still, offerings were made to certain idols. Even the worship of these idols, inter-connected with one another by a process of running (*Hajj*) from one place to the other, became the universal worship of Central Arabia. Thus, in the months of the sacred peace, the *Hajj* and the *Umra* were performed by many thousands of Arabs. Hijaz, therefore, even in the pre-Islamite times, was the centre of the religious life of the Arabs. As everywhere, wherever a large concourse of men takes place, so here trade throve. And, as a natural accompaniment of trade, the most delightful feature of the *Umra* and the *Hajj* was the great annual market held in the sacred neighbourhood. Here Arab life and activity reached their culminating point. The old Arabs made a sort of wine from dates, honey, wheat and barley. To their own native wines the Jews and the Christians added wines made of grapes. These wines they brought to the annual market ; and there, in the wine booths, sat the Sons of the Desert, sipping wines out of cups and glasses, and listening to the merry tunes of the singing girls provided for the enhancement of their joy. Among the traders and professional men who set up their stalls, the farrier and the veterinary surgeon rolled into one played an important role. The liveliest interest was evinced in the various competitors who sought

*For further information, see Khuda Bukhsh, *Islamic Civilization*, pp. 48-50.

distinction at these gatherings. Here the poets recited their verses, and here the young aspirants submitted their works to the judgment of the masters. In fine, whoever wished to make a name in Arabia must do so here in the markets of Hijaz ; in Uqaz, in Dhul Majas, in Mekka. When the market was over, Dhul Majas and Uqaz became empty and lost their importance. Mekka, however, developed into a powerful town and, after the fall of the Himyarite rule in South Arabia, became the most flourishing city of Arabia. This pre-eminence it secured, not by its sanctuary, for every market-place had its own—not even by its fair, for other places had fairs too—still less by its geographical position, for it lay in an inclement, barren basin. To what then must we ascribe this ascendency of Mekka ? To the intellectual superiority of the Quraish, as Julius Wellhausen has conclusively proved. Happy relations with the Northern Semites—particularly the Jewish element—may have influenced the intellectual awakening of the Mekkans. Commerce which extended to Syria, to Al-Hira, to South Arabia, certainly brought fresh stimulus and aspiration to them. Thus it was that, amongst the men who could read and write before Islam, a proportionately large number were Mekkans. We would, perhaps, have hesitated unconditionally to credit this information had we not known that Mohamed's first wife—trained in pre-Islamic days—carried on an extensive commerce of her own throughout the whole of Arabia. In spite of a lack of official organization—in matters of common concern we find, according to Wellhausen, a clear-sighted public spirit in Mekka, such as we find nowhere else in Arabia. Although every family was essentially autonomous, yet the interest of the town was placed first and foremost. There—*there was the authority.* The beginnings of a real town-organization are manifest—simple and small indeed—but none the less very remarkable in Arabia.

Thus, in the sixth and the beginning of the seventh

century, in Mekka and in the fairs of Hijaz, we best perceive the real need of the free Arab and the nature of his civilization. What the Arab lacked was the consciousness of national unity. For him there existed only the tribe and the family, but no Arab nation. What he further lacked was a sense of subordination. The idea that subordination was necessary, even a virtue, was an idea absolutely foreign to him. True enough, the Arabs had tribal chiefs, and to these chiefs they even showed regard and respect, but no chief had the *right* to command, and no one the *duty* to obey. These were the two striking defects of the Arab. To obviate them no one had hitherto dreamed or striven. Apart from these defects, they were yet a primitive but not an unimpressionable people.

The buildings of Mekka—including the town-hall and the Kaba—did not show any great skill or experience in architecture, and when we hear of Mohamed cleaning the Kaba of idols and removing the image of a pigeon, our illusion vanishes on being told that the image was the image made out of palm rind. About this time the artistic taste of the Arabs showed itself mainly in poetry and eloquence. At the court of Al-Hira, at the fair of Uqaz—everywhere where people met and offered prizes—there the poets appeared and declaimed their poems—the *Kasidas*. These *Kasidas* were all alike in their conventionality. All had for their subject description of the loved-one ; portraiture of camel and of horse ; account of a journey or a hunt ; occasionally a picture of a drinking-bout. Very rarely do we catch a breath of real poetry in all this mass of versification, yet we cannot but admire the force and compactness of language and the keen observations of the nature therein. Nor can we withhold our tribute of admiration for their gift in using to advantage the materials they had at their command. And to their credit too, it is that they found a large audience and wide appreciation, that these political productions in the sixth century—in the last pre-Islamic century—show a power and beauty never

attained again, and that contemporaneously with this poetical efflorescence there came the development and cultivation of the Arabic script. All this suggests an intellectual awakening for which we cannot fully account. These facts explain the existence in Arabia and specially in Mekka of men who were dissatisfied with the existing religion and who sought light in Christianity and Judaism and built up a sort of eclectic religion, at once new and progressive. It is not, therefore, strange that when Mohamed appeared on the scene he was regarded as one of these seekers after truth.

In this connexion the condition of Inner Arabia, in the sixth and the seventh centuries, offers a striking resemblance to the condition of South-eastern Germany about this time. From the beginning to the end of the seventh century Frankish missionaries traversed the country and strove to introduce Christianity, but with exceedingly small success. They succeeded no better than did the Hanifs—the seekers after truth, —of Mekka, whose teachings were of no avail against the tenacious conservatism of the Arabs.

By the time that Christianity was firmly established in Southern Germany the whole face of the world had changed. Long before Bishop Rupprecht (696) helped Christianity to victory in Bavaria, in the east the Heathen Empire of the Persians had fallen to pieces, and the leading Christian Power —the Byzantine Empire—had lost its best provinces—Syria and Egypt. And in the midst of the brilliant centres of civilization in Ctesiphon, in Damascus, in Alexandria, Sons of the Desert established themselves and ruled, representing a wholly new religion—Islam.

CHAPTER II

MOHAMED

It is characteristic of all religions to impress their stamp on human history ; and founders, prophets and apostles play their part in the civilization of their age and people. But never, in so rapid and direct a manner, has any religion achieved such world-affecting changes as Islam has achieved. And never has the setter forth of a new religion been so complete a master of his time and people as Mohamed was. It is, therefore, hopeless to expect to understand the development of the people who, through Islam, became the carriers and interpreters of its civilization, without knowing the "teachings" which swayed that civilization ; and, again, equally hopeless is it to sever those "teachings" from the man who taught them. Mohamed's personality and his message ; his message and politics and the cultural development of his people, are, as a whole, so closely intertwined in the Islamic edifice, that they must be considered together in their alternating interplay. We may pass over many things which have interested historians of Islam. Many things again, which hitherto were deemed well-established, have been made insecure and uncertain by recent critical investigations. The life of the Prophet, sketched and handed down to us in minute detail, seems to be trustworthy only in its main outlines—the rest is the outcome of imaginative piety, and pious fiction. At present, however, we are only concerned with those teachings and institutions of the Prophet which have a direct or indirect bearing on the rise and development of Islamic civilization. When we remember that, towards the end of the sixth century of the Christian era in Central Arabia—hitherto averse from any religious speculation—and its

meeting centre, Hijaz, a peculiar yearning for a better religion had been awakened, and that Christianity and Judaism were not unknown to most men, nay, had even been accepted by a few, we need not wonder that Mohamed, from a simple merchant, suddenly became a religious teacher, thinking more and more of one God ; of the Lord who created him from a clot of blood ; of the Most High who, by written revelation, taught men what they knew not.*

According to the old biographers the Prophet believed he had heard the first words from the other world in a trance. The extreme excitement which these words caused only subsided when, several months after, he heard the following words in a second vision : O thou enwrapped in thy mantle ! Arise and warn ! Magnify thy Lord ! And the abomination—flee it ! And bestow not favours that thou mayest receive again with increase. And for thy Lord—wait thou patiently. †

Not without reason the faithful biographers regard this as the first revelation and the starting-point of Mohamed's prophetic career. His whole subsequent life-work appears to them naught but an amplification of this vision. He became an admonisher of his nation, the glorifier of his Lord, a messenger of the severe laws of purity, and the founder of social equality among the Faithful. Long and toilsome, however, was the path that led to that devout consummation, for Mohamed was diffident by nature, and hesitated considerably before delivering his message to the Quraish. Thus it was some years before the number of the Faithful reached about forty. But, however small the band might be, the organizing power of Islam soon revealed itself.‡

The official prayer, or common prayer—rich in ceremonials

* Geiger, *Judaism and Islam* and Wright, *Early Christianity.*

†See my paper *Mohamed—The Prophet of God* ("Calcutta Review", September. 1923), p. 441.

‡Muir's *Life of Mohamed*, Vol. III, p. 53.

—is as old as Islam itself. Probably Christianity and Judaism inspired its form of worship; but, however that may be, among Muslims it acquired a special force and significance. They wish correctly to carry out the prescribed prostration and bending of the body led by itself to the *joint prayer* being performed according to a model and under a lead—Mohamed himself mostly leading the prayer. Whoever has seen the Muslims assembled at prayer in rows, carrying out the observances with astonishing uniformity, order, and dignity, will not fail to recognize the educative value of this disciplinary prayer. We need only remember that it was a proud race which yielded to no stranger's will; a people, wanting entirely in the sense of obedience—and we will recognize, at once, the importance of this form of prayer in awakening and maintaining a spirit of discipline. For this reason, to be sure, the prayer-ground has very justly been described as the first drill-ground of Islam. The regular meeting of all the faithful at this common prayer nourished the spirit of solidarity, implanted the feeling of the equality of man. In Arabia these were novel ideas. Hitherto, solidarity there had been, a solidarity only within the circle of blood relations. Pride of family, of descent, of wealth, of power, and contempt for the less prosperous and less powerful—these were the main features of Arab life.* When Mohamed, therefore, succeeded in establishing an alliance, embracing the rich and the poor alike, on equal terms, and in striking an effective blow at the narrow family and tribal unions, he paved the way for the unity of divided Arabia. From its very start Islam had aimed at this; namely, the loosening and destruction of narrow family and tribal ties. True, this attempt was not completely successful; for today Arabia is as divided still as it was before Islam—yet its success, however partial, is proof positive of the

*See Goldziher's masterly chapter "*Muruwwa und Din*" in his *Moh. Studien*. Brown's *Lit. Hist. of Persia*, pp. 189-191. Nicholson's *Lit. Hist. of the Arabs*, Chapter II, "History and Legends of the Pagan Arabs."

profound influence of the new ideas on Arab Heathenism.

Besides the common prayer, the conception of social equality was an innovation peculiar to Islam. Help and maintenance of the poor thus became a sacred trust. It was left no longer to individuals to give what they pleased, but the poor-tax (*zakat*) became an obligatory duty, and was collected in a central treasury, and administered therefrom.

Unfortunately, on Mohamed's life and work and its progress for the first ten years of Islam, we have but scant information. What we have are merely short episodes from these eventful years, relating to the struggles against prevailing customs. On these stray and fitful data light is thrown by the Qur'an, the traditions, and the later Arab historians. We see Mohamed wrestling with indifference, prejudice, distrust on the part of the Quraish. We hear him announcing in thunderous terms the terrors of the approaching Day of Judgment. But we do not notice his flock increasing. After ten years Mohamed's followers were scarcely more numerous than they were in the earliest times. The position of the ruling families of Mekka was not so much against the new teachings as against the social and political revolutions which they sought to introduce. A glance at the constitution of the small community suffices to prove the displeasure and disquiet of the Quraish. In this new society not only were tribal differences wiped out, but even the ancient division between free men and slaves was threatened with extinction. And the violence with which they sought to remove the slaves from the influence of the Prophet had a new and unsuspected consequence; the emigration of the disciples of the Prophet to Abyssinia. Whatever may have been the aim and object of the emigrants and whatever the reason which brought them back to their homes, the small community formed a close circle, and showed a spirit of obdurate defiance against the traditional practices of the Arabs. The apprehensions of the Quraish may well be

imagined. Were we to follow his lead, said they, we would be uprooted from our country.

The persecutions to which Mohamed was exposed in Mekka, and the failure of his mission there, have only this much historical interest for us, that they urged him on to seek fresh fields for his activity. Emigrations increased, conversions decreased, and the Mekkans worried themselves no longer, in the belief that the Prophet had failed in his efforts. When even the attempt of the Prophet to make converts in the neighbouring town of Taif had proved futile, he lost heart, and waited, resigned in seclusion, for the time of the pilgrimage, and the divine peace of the year 620 A.D.

For years had Mohamed attended the great Fair of Uqaz, to announce his teachings there ; for there met the Beduins of entire Central Arabia and the neighbouring towns ; there the ambitious exhibited, in rivalry, their best productions ; there poets declaimed their finest literary efforts. However slender—in comparison with his expectations—the success, the Prophet gradually found there people sympathetic to his preachings. These were the inhabitants of the town of Yathrib.*

Since remote times Yathrib, four days' journey north of Mekka, has been an important station on the commercial route to Syria. In pre-Christian days Jews and Judaised Arabs ruled this town, but since the fifth century they had shared this rule with the tribes of Aus and Khazraj who had migrated there from South Arabia. Living thus side by side with the Jews, the Arabs were by no means ignorant of the ideas of revelation, of recompense after death, of ceremonial purity. And these ideas, in all outer seeming, had greatly

*Dr Wustendfeld's translation of *Samhudi* (Gesch. der Stadt Medina, p. 54). The first Medinite who accepted the teachings of the Prophet was Suwaid bin al-Samit of the family of Amr bin al-Aus. Nicholson, pp. 169 *et seq.* There were in Medina four principal parties : the Refugees (Muhajirin), the Helpers (Ansar), the Hypocrites (Munafique) and the Jews (Yahud) Nicholson, p. 171.

undermined the influence of Arab heathenism. Among such people Mohamed was very sympathetically listened to. In the year 620 A.D. he managed specially to interest some Yathribites in his cause. In the following year these Yathribites introduced six of their townsfolk to him, and discussed with him the question of his reception into Medina. This was followed in the year 622 by a deputation of seventy-five men, who brought to the Prophet the consent of the Yathribites to receive him and his followers in their midst. Thus the so-called "Flight" was no flight at all, but was a scheme of migration carefully considered for two years, but which could only be secretly given effect to, for fear of apprehended violence on the part of the Quraish.

In groups, some 200 men, including those that had come back from Abyssinia, thus proceeded to Yathrib. On the 24th of September, 622, Mohamed, who was the last to leave Mekka with his people, met his followers at Quba, to lead the entry into Yathrib. This is the celebrated Hegira from which dates the Muslim era. It is a turning-point in the life and work of the Prophet—the great turning-point in the history of Islam.

The man who just left Mekka, and the man who now entered Medina, seem to be two different men.* The former

*I do not agree with all this. I have fully discussed this subject in my paper *Mohamed—The Prophet of God* "(Calcutta Review," Sept., 1923). The only difference, if difference there be, is that now the scope of the Prophet's work was considerably extended, and that he was called upon to face and solve problems which could not have arisen in Mekka, where intense was the opposition, bitter the persecution, and where the Prophet was without any proper resources or effective support. But, as Hell himself points out, even in Medina his life was simple and austere—free from pomp and parade of power. The Prophet—at Mekka as at Medina—was dominated by one passion and one only—the glory of Islam. The march of events added to his prophetic duties the burden of a temporal chief. Could he shirk or shrink from it? Had he not numerous precedents in the history of the Israelites? But who can honestly charge him with one single act of cruelty or selfishness? He was a ruler with the self-effacement of a saint—a religious chief free from the pretensions of a Pope—a man who led and bent all to his will by the sheer force of his magnetic, all-subduing personality. Such a one did Mohamed remain to his last breathing moment—a beacon-light unto the end of time.

was an ideal preacher of a perfect religion who, for the convictions, cheerfully endured scorn and persecutions, and who sought no other distinction than that of being acknowledged a messenger of God. There is no trace of love of power in him—nothing to indicate that he was striving to set up a state organization at the head of which he wished to preside. Of social reforms the one thing that he sought to achieve in Mekka—supported by the doctrines of the unity of God and the Day of Judgment ; reinforced by the joys and terrors of Heaven and Hell—was the widening of the circle of duties beyond the tribe to all the Faithful alike, and to mankind at large in the event of their accepting the true faith.

He left Mekka as a Prophet, but entered Medina as the chief of a community. The " fugitives" constituted a tribe by themselves, and as a corporate body were described under the name and style of *Muhajirin*. This change of position created fresh problems, set new tasks ; but Mohamed was quite equal to the occasion. The Prophet now retires into the background—the diplomatist now comes forward. The Prophetship is, now, only an ornament of the ruler ; an effective weapon for establishing, extending, maintaining power. In coming to Medina Mohamed became more a bringer of peace than the preacher of a faith. But therein precisely lay the need of Medina and the path to power. For more than a century the inhabitants of Medina—the two tribes of Aus and Khazraj—had been interlocked in bitterest enmity, and lived in a state of incessant warfare. It was the hope that Mohamed might restore peace among them that had induced the Yathribites to welcome him in their midst. Mohamed had apparently understood the situation in Medina. He went there, not as a ruler, but as one seeking protection—protection for himself and his persecuted followers—and as such he sought the sympathies of all parties in Medina. He sought, above all, the sympathies of the rich and powerful tribe of Khazraj, and, according to the old Heathen custom, he effected a fraterniza-

tion between his most loyal fugitives and the most influential Khazrajites.* Towards the Jews and the Christians Mohamed played the part of a friend, and by many concessions to their faiths led them to believe that some day Islam might effect a junction with them.

To the Faithful the four-cornered courtyard of his dwelling-house served as a place of prayer and meeting. According to the Arab fashion the house consisted of rooms opening out into the courtyard, and accessible therefrom. As protection against the sun and bad weather, a little away from the wall ran a row of columns of palm trunks covered with palm branches, which served the purpose of roofing.

How exceedingly simple and unpretentious was the Prophet in his public appearances may be inferred from the fact that, for himself, he never provided a special place at prayer. When he addressed the assembled Faithful he leaned against one of the palm trunks of the mosque, and only two years before his death he had a raised seat—*Minbar*—made, on which he sat when he received embassies; presided over the deliberations of his community; delivered the law. The *Minbar* was a platform two yards high, with two steps, each a yard high, and a flat surface of one yard, square-shaped.†

* "From forty-five to fifty refugees were thus united to as many citizens of Medina. The bond was of the closest description, and involved not only a peculiar devotion to each other's interests in the persons thus associated but in case of death it superseded the claims of blood, the 'brother' becoming exclusive heir to all the property of the deceased. This peculiar custom lasted for about a year and half, when Mohamed, finding it, after the victory of Badr, to be no longer necessary, abolished the bond, and suffered inheritance to take its usual course." Muir, Vol. III., pp. 17, 18.

† "The pulpit." See Muir, Vol. III, p. 55. Mohamed ascended the pulpit for the first time on a Friday, p. 56. The Friday service described, p. 57. The pulpit was invested by Mohamed with great sanctity. All oaths regarding disputed rights were to be taken close by it, p. 57. In his *Caliphate* Arnold gives us an interesting history of *Minbar*, and shows its importance in the institution of the Caliphate, pp. 35-41. See Dr. Wustenfeld's translation of Samhudi's *Medina* (Gesch. der Stadt Medina), pp. 62, 63.

From this exceedingly simple seat of the Prophet in the "assembly chamber" gradually grew, under Christian influence, the pulpit—on which, early indeed, special artistic efforts were expended. Just as this simple structure was a prelude to the Islamic art of the future, so measures, devised to meet the requirements of the moment, but marked with an extraordinary insight, became the basis of the proud edifice of the Islamic Empire. Among these the first place must be assigned to the various treaties with the Yathribites, with the Arab Heathens and the Jews which Mohamed concluded while at Medina.

The so-called "*Ordinance regulating the community of Medina*" shows so rare a statesmanship and is of such far-reaching importance that we must acquaint ourselves with its main provisions. The most noticeable feature of this document is the passage "*you form a community as against mankind.*" Here we encounter something novel and strange in Arabia. This startling idea finds its amplification in the statement: "*God's protection is meant for one and all : the protection of the Faithful is the bounden duty of all. The Faithful are pledged to protect each other against the entire world.*" Hitherto the individual Arab had no other protection than that of his family or that of his patron. Mohamed rid himself, at one stroke, of the old Arab conception which had kept the Mekkans themselves back from adopting a drastic policy of suppression and repression against him. And with it he dissolved the old ties ; broke down old barriers ; and placed every Muslim under the protection of the entire community of the Faithful—a protection which even extended to blood-revenge as is emphasized in another passage ; "*as regards bloodshed for the cause of God, the Faithful are avengers of each other's blood.*"* These passages read as if

* *Cf.* Muir, Vol. III., p. 31. Mohamed was desirous of a combination with the Jews. The treaty of Medina, p. 32. Krehl *Das Leben Muhammed*, pp. 138 *et seq.* Specially p. 142. Bebel, Die *Mohammedanische-Arabische Kulturperiode*, Chapters 1 and 2.

they were laying down the basis of an Islamic Empire. But, in reality, they were only intended to deal with the problems of the day. Mohamed was merely thinking of securing himself and his flock from the violence of the unfaithful Mekkans, and of avenging any wrong that might be done to him or to them. He would not disclose to the Yathribites who had received him as a Peacemaker—before the actual conclusion of the treaty—his scheme of revenge; and had, therefore, to give a complexion to the treaty which concealed its real aim. Similarly he entered into an agreement with the Jews which was set down in a treaty. It looks like a defensive alliance pure and simple, until we come to the last clause, which really deprives the Jews of all benefit under it. "When the Jews are invited to peace they should accept peace, and when the Jews invite the Faithful to peace they have towards them precisely the same duty as the Jews, *except war for religion's sake.*" That war for religion was the ultimate aim of the Prophet's policy—particularly a war of revenge against Mekka—that he was on the very brink of translating his intention into fact, and undertaking an expedition against Mekka was never suspected, at the time, either by the Jews or the Yathribites. It was not, however, difficult to persuade the "fugitives" to his scheme of things. One only needed the right instinct to make use of them: their resentment at their exile, their acute home-sickness. He nourished and fortified their wrath by exposing the poverty and privations of the less lucky fugitives. In the evenings he sent for some seventy of them—half-naked, destitute, forlorn figures—and placed before them a bowl of roasted barley, and permitted them to sleep under the projecting roof of the mosque. And at the same time he assigned greater and greater prominence to Mekka in his religious system. The Kaba was now transformed into the oldest and the most sacred sanctuary of Allah; for had not Allah Himself designed its plan, and Abraham and his son Ismail built it? Was not Abraham himself the first to perform

the religious ceremonies at the Kaba? And did not Abraham hint at the advent of an Arabian Prophet after him? Mohamed and the Kaba thus formed an integral whole, and when the *Qibla* was changed from Jerusalem to Mekka, severance from Judaism was complete, and the national centre of Islam was fixed at the Kaba for ever more. Formerly, at prayers, the Muslims turned towards Jerusalem. It was too late, indeed, when the Heathens and the Jews and sober-minded converts of Yathrib realized how dangerous was the element which had arrived amongst them in the person of the Prophet. Before they could stir themselves to opposition Mohamed took a step forward on the path that lay clear before him: War against Mekka, with the Yathribites as allies; and, in the event of success, war against enemies in his own camp.

Already, in the first half of the second year of the Hegira, Mohamed ventured upon a war. By its position Yathrib commanded the two high roads of North Arabia along which the Mekkan caravan carried on its commercial intercourse with Syria. The first phase of the war was to lie in wait for the Mekkans and to plunder them when possible. It was the old Arab form of war, but Mohamed, as was often the case with him, while ready to avail himself of any Arab custom which served his purpose, was never prepared to accept its binding force. Thus, in the midst of the holy peace, he attacked and plundered the unwary Mekkans. The passion for booty rendered the Muslims oblivious of the amazing procedure adopted by the Prophet, and when he made arrangements for a yet greater stroke, namely, the capture of the summer-caravan expected from Syria, not only, as hitherto, "fugitives" but also many of the Yathribites joined and followed him to the field. No one thought of a battle. They only hoped to capture a great and rich caravan. The object was not attained. The Mekkan leaders got wind of the design, and on this alarming information the entire militia of

* Nicholson, pp. 62-70.

Mekka—some 1,000 men with 700 camels and 100 horses—mobilized. It managed, by forced marches, to save the caravan. Thus, while the real object of the ambuscade escaped their hands, the two armies stood face to face. Imagining the hostilities at an end, the Mekkans waited to enjoy themselves at Badr—a market-place, an important caravan station, some 40 miles north of Mekka and 20 west of Medina. But Mohamed thought otherwise, and now sought war. He knew the superiority of his small band over the numerical strength of the Quraish, and would not let an opportunity slip of showing to the Mekkans the stuff his people were made of. The new religion had equipped the *quondam* Mekkans with qualities unknown to the Arabs : discipline and contempt for death. Mohamed had inculcated *discipline* by repeated references to it in the revelations of the time : "Obey God and His Prophet." This was the refrain of many a sura. The call for discipline was further reinforced, improved, perfected by the practice of public prayers.* *Contempt for death*, on the other hand, was born of the enticing prospects of paradise which temptingly dangled before those who fell fighting for the faith. To these distinctive moral qualities was added experience in the technical arts of war, which, even in times anterior to Islam, had won for the Yathribites the reputation of being "the people of citadels and coats of mail." From the earliest times the Yathribites had been exposed to the attacks and incursions of the Beduins ; and when these attacked them on horseback they met them on foot, or retired, in case of necessity, to fortified towns, of which there were many in the neighbourhood.

Discipline† and contempt for death were thus the gifts

* Muir, Vol. III, pp. 41, 53.

† See Ouida's *Critical Studies*, pp. 79-82. She quotes from Georges Darien who shows what a curse to civilization the modern military discipline has become. We should read these pages and reflect. How different was the Islamic discipline !

of the Prophet; experience in warfare (fighting in close, compact array) the contribution of the Yathribites, to Islam.

When the Quraishites, on the 16th of March, advanced towards Badr, the Muslims awaited them in close, compact array. Mohamed himself, with a staff in his hand, went up and down the line and arranged them. And when, after the old traditional preliminaries of war, namely, challenge in words, the Mekkan cavalry burst upon the columns of Mohamed, they, without wavering for an instant, firmly held their ground. This was something novel, something astounding to the Mekkans. They turned their horses and went back to their places without shedding a drop of blood. This was followed by single combats which lasted till the evening—Mohamed watching each alternating course in intense excitement. By sunset most of the Mekkan leaders had fallen, and the entire Mekkan army showed signs of flight. Mohamed realized that the opportunity had come for his troops to reap the harvest of discipline. He stepped forward, raised a handful of dust and flung it at the enemy. This was a signal for a rush forward, and the Mekkans retreated and fled. This was the first victorious battle of Islam. We have closely followed its course, for it shows the superiority of the Muslims over their fellow-countrymen. All later military successes of Islam were due to the qualities which were now for the first time brought forth and developed among the Arabs: discipline and contempt for death. We will now therefore proceed to consider the effect of the series of wars which began with this battle. The victory at Badr resulted in the consolidation of the power of the Prophet in Yathrib. Henceforward Yathrib is the "town"—Al-Medina—of the Prophet. Its ancient name vanishes—out of sight, out of mind. The largest portion of the still unconverted Arabs now voluntarily accept Islam without demur or hesitation. The Jews were the only powerful section whose conversion could not be expected.

About this time we clearly find, writ large, "love of

power and vengeance" as cardinal points in the Prophet's programme.* Love of power demanded unlimited rule in Medina—hence the banishment of the Jews; whereas vengeance cried for the subjugation of Mekka. It was anticipated that the Beduins would submit when Mekka fell, but it was not quite desirable that it should be so, for no plunder was permissible within the pale of Islam.

The campaign of annihilation against the Jews was carried on according to the old tried maxim: *Divide et impera.* Within a month after the battle of Badr one of the three Jewish tribes—disunited among themselves—was attacked by the "fugitives," besieged in their houses, and, after an unconditional surrender, was banished from the town. Before a similar fate could be dealt out to the two remaining Jewish tribes, namely, the tribes of Nadir and Quraiza, Mohamed's attention was diverted to the Mekkans, who were marching against Medina with 3,000 foot and 200 cavalry. Confident of victory Mohamed advanced towards them with only 700 men, and came to battle at the foot of the mountain of Ohod—three-quarters of an hour's journey from Medina. The battle progressed unfavourably for the Prophet. His instructions presumed a discipline far too rigid for the young army to maintain, and the result was that they were not carried out. Probably upon foreign advice, Mohamed had stationed 50 archers on the left wing of the column, and had issued the following order to them: "If we win, do not rush for booty. If we are hewn down, do not come to our help."

But the Prophet had overrated the power of his authority as against the natural instincts of his troops. When the Mekkans wavered and left the booty to the Muslims, even the archers—contrary to their instructions—left their post to share in the spoils. A leader of the Mekkan cavalry—a born commander—perceived the weakness of the Medinites, and attacked them in the rear. In the confusion of the renewed

* I do not accept this view. It is untrue and unjust.

battle Mohamed was wounded, and the Muslims surrendered the field. Thus the second battle of Islam was a defeat! Mohamed, however, soon got over this momentary crisis. This, too, was due to his personal superiority. While the Mekkans lacked a leader to help them in reaping the fruit of their victory, the Prophet, by words of comfort, by booty-seeking expeditions, by the expulsion of the two remaining Jewish tribes—Nadir and Quraiza—conquered the dangers that threatened his authority in Medina and roused once again the flagging spirits of the Faithful. Only a year after, by appearing with 1,500 followers at the market of Badr, Mohamed rehabilitated his prestige and vindicated his honour before the whole of Central Arabia. Gradually but surely the Mekkans realized that their commerce, their position in Arabia, their very existence, were at stake unless Medina was effectively checked and crushed in its new exploiting career. And thus, after two years of strenuous endeavour, they put together an army of 10,000—partly Mekkans and partly Beduins. Beduins as allies of townsfolk; Beduins as a constituent element in a great army—this, forsooth, was a new phenomenon in the military history of Inner Arabia. It was due, doubtless, to the pressing need of the moment, to the desire to uproot and destroy the disquieting element in their country.

Medina, the centre of unrest, was to be besieged, captured. But once again the Mekkans found themselves face to face with a new military stratagem, simple but none the less sufficient to wreck and ruin their design. Upon the advice of a Persian, Mohamed had a ditch dug on the ill-protected northern side of the town, and there took up his position with an army of some 3,000 men. If the ditch threw the Mekkans out of calculation, want of discipline among the Beduins, inclemency of the weather, untiring defence and vigilance of the Muslims did the rest. In the darkness of the night the besieging army, weary and dispirited retired after a three weeks' siege.

Thus Medina was saved from a danger which would have meant utter annihilation—particularly so as the Jews, still there, were co-operating with the Mekkans to that end. The result of the "Battle of the Ditch" was a fresh victory of organization over sheer mass power.

With a keen insight Mohamed followed up this success. He imposed on the treasonable Jews due punishment.* Medina was now entirely at his feet. It was of greater moment to him to keep the Beduins in check than to convert them to Islam. Mekka was no longer to be either feared or scorned. The Prophet now sought to win it over. On the basis of a treaty which shows wonderful self-restraint on his part, he visited Mekka in the year 629.† Mohamed knew that his work would now speak for itself. The most intelligent of the Mekkans clearly perceived that his work could no longer be stayed or ended, and with equal clearness they also perceived that the importance of Mekka was in no way thereby threatened or assailed. No wonder, then, that in the circumstances the best military leaders of Mekka—Amr and Khalid—went over to Mohamed, in whose service they would find a far more favourable field for their talents and activity than they would with the Mekkans.

Henceforward Mohamed's army was invincible within Arabia. He was now master of the situation, and could deal with the tribes as he wished, but the time was not yet ripe for campaigns abroad—for wars with the powers surrounding his native country. And yet Mohamed about this time came into collision with one of them—the Eastern Empire. The murder of fifteen Muslims on the Syrian frontier sufficed to induce the Prophet to send an army of 3,000 to the north.‡ In the

* Jews of Medina, see Muir, II, p. 211, III, pp. 31, 119, 130, 137. The treaty made with them, pp. 150, 289. Their hatred of the Prophet, p. 291.

† The treaty was concluded in 628.

‡ Bury, *Roman Empire*, Vol. II, p. 272. Krehl, p. 310.

opinion of his community—in the judgment of later historians—it was merely a sense of the " duty of protection " that led the Prophet to this venture. But the real reasons are unascertained to this day. Probably there were economic reasons outside the scope of the Prophet's plan ; for it is strange that he did not accompany this campaign ; in fact, he predicted its defeat. The Muslim army met the better trained and better equipped Roman army at Muta, on the Dead Sea, and, after three days of alternating success, was beaten back. The Prophet received the remnant with words of consolation. The Beduin tribes, who had hoped for a moment to shake off the yoke of the Prophet, were soon convinced that it was more to their interest to be with him than against him. This conviction gaining ground among them, whole tribes and groups of tribes passed over to Islam.

At last the year 630 saw the fall of Mekka—the fruit of unwearying persistence and sagacious efforts. The Muslim army—10,000 strong—met with no resistance, and Mohamed treated the town with extreme leniency. Only a few old enemies—hostile to the Prophet and dangerous to his cause—were sentenced to death. Booty-making was forbidden, and the old proprietary rights were left unaffected. To the Kaba Mohamed showed respect—only the idols within were removed. The Prophet commanded the Mekkans to destroy their household gods, and during his stay at Mekka, two generals were commissioned to destroy the sanctuary of the goddess Uzza in Nakhla, and that of Suwa in the land occupied by the tribe of Hudail.* Thus Mohamed attained the summit of his ambition. The curiously anomalous position of the individual Beduin tribe, as over against the great community of the Prophet ; the individual Beduin, behind whom stood a more or less powerful tribe, and the individual Muslim, behind whom stood the whole of Islam as his

*Krehl, pp. 326, 369-371. Krehl sums up the life-work of the Prophet, and the summary is well worth a careful study.

protector, urged the Beduins on to a peaceful junction with the Prophet.

Embassies came in from all parts of Arabia to discuss the question of conversion from a political angle of vision, but Mohamed clung to his original religious purpose, and would not deflect from it. But be it noted here that it was not at a systematic construction of his faith that he was aiming. It was merely at impressing upon his people their moral responsibility to Allah, and the necessity of submission to His will. Against heathenism he strove, in the name of Allah, to improve marriage laws, to humanize marital conditions; to end the worship of idols; to stop the killing of new-born girls; to unite the tribes into one close network of amity and concord; to bar the dreadful gates of war; to usher in an era of peace, happiness, goodwill.* Even in dealing with the Jews and Christians he never lost sight of his aim. When the Jews constituted a danger to his work, he fought them unto destruction; but when they only differed from him in matters religious he was generous and tolerant enough to leave them alone. He interfered as little with the Jewish as with the Christian faith, so long as they did not collide with his politics in Arabia. It is apparent that the position which Mohamed assigned to the Christians and the Jews in the body-politic of Islam was of the greatest possible consequence to Islamic cultural development generally†. Thus of far-reaching consequence were the treaties which were the outcome of a campaign towards the north—the last that Mohamed led in person. For unknown reasons Mohamed stationed an army of 30,000 strong at Tabuk, on the frontier of the Ghassanide Empire, and, without single military operation, concluded treaties with the Christian Prince of Ayla and some Jewish tribes of the South.‡ According to these treaties Jews and

*Julius Braun, *Gemalde der Mohamedanische Welt*, pp. 78-81. See Note (1) on p. 88, Goldziher, *Mohamed and Islam*, pp. 14-21.

†Krehl, p. 140 *et seq.*

‡Muir, Vol. IV, p. 182 *et seq.* Treaty with John, Christian Prince of

Christians could be taken into the protection of the Islamic community as against payment of a capitation-tax. In Islam there were two classes of tax-payers—the Faithful who paid the poor-tax (*Zakat*) and the professors of monotheistic religions who paid the capitation-tax (*Khiraj*). As against the payment of this tax the Islamic Empire was responsible to non-Muslims for the protection of their person and property. To the heathens Mohamed was less indulgent than to the Jews and Christians. Nine years after he had settled down in Medina, through his deputy, Abu Bakr, he had it announced at the Mekkan feast that "the heathens were not entitled to make a pilgrimage to the sanctuaries of Allah. Kill them after the expiry of the holy months, kill them wherever you meet them! Take them prisoners, besiege them, hold every strategic position, and only when they accept Islam, grant them their freedom."* Thus a martial stamp was impressed upon Muslim activities, and thus the impulse was given to the later propaganda work. This policy, however, chiefly affected the heathen Arabs. As against the organized forces of Islam they had no choice but submission. They might believe what they pleased, but outwardly they must conform to Islam.

When, in the following year, Mohamed came to the annual pilgrim feast, there were no longer any unfaithful among the thousands that had come to hear him. Arabia bowed to the will of one man, and yielded to the spell of a higher faith, a loftier morality. And lo! there lay open before her the path to world-conquest. Already preparations were in progress for an expedition to the frontiers of the Eastern

Ayla, p. 187, Vol. IV. Treaty with the Jews of Macna, Adzruh and Jarba, p. 190. Having concluded these matters Mohamed quitted Tabuk, having halted there for 20 days, and returned to Medina, Dec., A.D. 630.

*On Jizyah, see Arnold's *Preaching of Islam*, p. 60 *et seq*. The Qur'an (II, 59, v. 73) expressly recognizes Jews, Christians and Sabians as capable of deserving the favour of God. See in this connection Arnold's masterly article in Vol. 9 of the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, pp. 765-769. On the history and legal aspect of Jizyah, see Aghnides, *Introd. to Mohamedan Law* (Columbia University, 1916), p. 398 *et seq*.

Empire, when, on the 8th of June, 632, the Prophet passed away.

It was now to be decided whether the ideas which Islam had implanted in Arabia were themselves powerful enough to hold the Arabs together and to lead them along the path of glory and conquest, or whether it was merely the personality and wisdom of a single man—apart from the religion he founded—that had so brilliantly triumphed so far.*

* I would specially refer the reader to Dr. Krehl's *Mohamed* (Leipzig, 1884) and to Dr. Arnold's *Preaching of Islam* (London, 1913). Both these works combine scholarship with sympathy, and throughout show an understanding spirit rare in European writers. To both of these scholars Mohamed is a genuine Prophet of God—full of divine ecstasy; bent on fulfilling his divine mission. Dr. Arnold (p. 34) has exposed the popular Christian fallacy which sees two diametrically different persons in the Mohamed of Mekka and the Mohamed of Medina. Dr. Krehl's life is one continuing tribute to the undeviating zeal of the Prophet. Dr. Arnold's book should be more widely known, and Dr. Krehl's should be made accessible to those who know no German.

CHAPTER III

MUSLIM CONQUESTS

WITH the death of the Prophet a question of extraordinary magnitude—hitherto unthought of—arose: the question of his successor. The need for a controlling hand was so obviously pressing in Medina that the necessity for a successor was not only not called into question but was affirmed and emphasized without challenge. But difficult was the problem to fix the principles on which the successor was to be appointed and, when appointed, to define precisely the limits of his power. This was all the more difficult since snapped with Mohamed was the link which bound the diverse elements together in Medina. Mohamed's companions in flight— ascendant in power so far—now felt, all at once, that they were supportless strangers at Medina, and the two Medinite tribes of Aus and Khazraj—knit closely together so far by Islam—awoke afresh to an ancient rivalry. The proposal to elect an *Amir* out of their midst and another from the Mekkans reveals, in a most unmistakable manner, how very far behind the Mekkans were the Medinites in the matter of politics. The proposal—if put through—would have seriously menaced the prospects of nascent Islam. Urged by their old Arab instincts, the "fugitives" eagerly caught and followed the hint, given to them by the Prophet when he chose Abu Bakr to conduct the prayer during his illness. Abu Bakr, the most senior in age of Mohamed's kinsmen, his father-in-law, indeed, was thus the successor of the Prophet—a successor marked out by the Prophet himself. When Abu Bakr, accompanied by his followers, repaired to the place where the Medinites had assembled, a dangerous dispute arose between the parties, but the fiery Omar managed to save the situation (here again

Omar followed an old Arab custom) by clasping the hand of Abu Bakr—a token of homage. Most of those that were present followed Omar's example, but general election by the mass of the people took place the following day. No inconsiderable number of influential men, however, refrained from doing homage to the Caliph-elect. These were the Hashimites—the kinsmen of the Prophet. This election, be it noted, took no account of the principle of hereditary succession. And yet the Mekkans, ever since their adoption of Islam, sought to establish all claims flowing from tribal kinship or blood relationship. But be that as it may—in the election of Abu Bakr kinship had no part or lot. His authority proceeded from the free election of the assembled community. If this form of election—traceable, indeed, to pre-Islamite notions and customs—had been fixed as the legal standard form of election, it would have spelt disaster to the blood relations of the Prophet. But in those days theoretical consequences were not considered—the immediate need of the moment sufficed. But the result was grave and far-reaching—every fresh election evoked fresh disputes ; nay clash of arms. Nor did these early Muslims think of settling the mode of election ; nor yet of fixing the limits of the Caliph's power. To Mohamed they had hitherto looked for guidance in all their concerns. In the same spirit they accepted his successor. As Mohamed had claimed no distinction for himself, other than the distinction of leading the prayer—so also they expected the same of his successor. And Medina was deeply interested in maintaining this *status quo*, and in keeping the successor of the Prophet within its walls. But different was the trend of thought outside those hallowed precincts. Arabia had submitted to the personality of the Prophet, and the moment that personality was removed by death the old spirit of feud and resentfulness of restrictions—kept in check by the Prophet—broke loose in all its fury. It is noteworthy that, while the nomad Arabs expected, from the changed circumstances, nothing but immunity from taxes, the settled popu-

lation showed a tendency to substitute their own local prophets in the place of the Prophet of Medina. New prophets arose in different parts of Arabia. Possibly these local prophets, even in the days of the Prophet, exercised a certain amount of influence —though of course, by no means, comparable to that wielded by Mohamed. One of them, Maslama, had actually made serious attempts at rivalling the Prophet. Acknowledged as chief, and honoured as prophet by his tribe—the Banu Hanifa, inhabiting Yamama—he was daring enough to propose to Mohamed that the two prophets should remain in peace side by side. Mohamed, though treating Maslama as an impostor, yet thought it prudent to leave him alone. After Mohamed's death, Saja'ah, a woman of the Banu Tamim, set herself up as a prophetess, and sought alliance with Maslama. In the north of Medina, Tolaiha held the field as a prophet, and in Yemen Al-Aswad was acknowledged as a prophet of his people. Nowhere, where these prophets reigned, was the supremacy of Medina recognized. In fact, all the tribes of Najd and Southern Hijaz closely united together and mightily strove to destroy the hegemony of Medina.

Arabia was once again on the war path; and of the teachings of the Prophet there was but little trace left, outside Medina. The Beduins, therefore, combined to destroy Medina, which stood out, four square, in the midst of apostate Arabia. They actually attacked the town, but it repulsed the attack. Arabia thus had to be reconquered for Islam. Violent was the conflict in the north and south, but Medina triumphed all along the line. The war for the subjugation of Yamama, and the overthrow of its prophet Maslama, was the toughest and the bloodiest. History relates that, with an army of 40,000 men, Maslama crushed two distinct Muslim armies, when a third, under Khalid, advanced from the north. Even the terrible Khalid—by far the best general of infant Islam—found it no light task to hold out against the superior numerical strength of Maslama, but the unsubdued fervour of

the Medinites, of the "fugitives" and Beduins, gave a power and strength to the Muslim army which enabled it, in the end, successfully to conquer the forces of Maslama. Maslama had to seek safety within a high-walled garden. Egress being impossible, a fierce massacre followed, and Maslama fell. The number of the fallen Banu Hanifa—probably exaggerated—was estimated at 10,000. But no less severe was the loss on the side of the Muslims, and the fear of the Caliph that the death-roll among the Companions of the Prophet might endanger the oral transmission of the Qur'an, is eloquently suggestive of the extent and enormity of the Muslim casualties. With the victory at the "Garden of death", a second subjugation of Arabia was almost reassured, if not actually achieved. As four years before—so now—the subjugated Arabs unhesitatingly poised their spears against those who had been their allies and confederates hitherto, and thus, within six months, the spirit of revolt subsided and faded from Arabia, leaving the path clear for the advance of Islam, the ascendancy of Medina, the rule of the Caliphs. Arabia had conquered herself, but with it she had brought upon herself, too, the miseries which wars usually bring in their wake. The nomads saw their flocks destroyed—the townsfolk their fields, their commerce. Thus the long, simmering impulse, to cross the frontiers of the Arabian peninsula and to descend to the enticing countries around, now powerfully asserted itself. Islam had forbidden inter-tribal plunder. Islam had concentrated its strength. Islam had given a common purpose to its military ventures. The conditions of the Persian and Byzantine Empires suited its design and favoured its progress. Thus under Abu Bakr began the victorious campaigns of Islam; and, once set in motion, the Arabs unceasingly pressed forward—helped on by events in Arabia itself. A happy augury for Islam! In Arabia the transformation of conditions had been effected far too rapidly and radically to alter the Arab nature. The old Arab vices of particularism and

individualism, not absolutely extinguished but merely suppressed by Islam, worked but in the dark under the first two Caliphs—Abu Bakr and Omar. Under Othman and Ali, however, they once again burst forth. Despite his piety, Othman was the first to give a secular complexion to the Caliphate, and to unchain the hitherto restrained family spirit. Not without fierce opposition, to be sure, was the first step towards the secularization of the Caliphate taken. It cost Othman his life. This catastrophe (A.H. 35) called a halt to Muslim arms,* which, ever since the death of the Prophet, had known naught but victory. These conquering campaigns paved the way for Islamic civilization, and we must therefore glance at them.† They began with a movement in the direction of a country which, since earliest times, has been a theatre of Arab immigration, namely, the lower plain of the Euphrates. The chief of the Banu Bakr, Muthanna (having his seat in its neighbourhood), sought the Caliph's permission to lead a foray to the Persian frontier. Abu Bakr sent him Khalid, who had just returned from the battle known as "Death's garden." Khalid was to command 10,000 of his own and 8,000 of Muthanna's troops. Towards the end of A.H. 11 (A.D. 633) he advanced into Persian territory, close to the mouth of the Euphrates. Three months later, at Kazima, Khalid's troops met those of the Persain Governor, and the first battle ended in the victory of Islam. The fall of Hira speedily followed, and by the end of A.H. 12 Khalid was master of both banks of the Euphrates, and was actually within three days' march of the Persian capital—Ctesiphon. But, after this initial success, Abu Bakr could no

* Muir's *Caliphate*, p. 225. See Chapter II of Arnold's *Caliphate*.

† I would here draw attention to Oswald Spengler's *Untergang des Abendlandes*. In Vol. II he discusses the problem of *Arab Culture*, p. 227 *et. seq*. Whether we agree or disagree with his views he has opened up a fresh vista of thought and struck a new vein in the history of this phenomenon. I would also draw attention to Walter Leaf's *Homer and History*, pp. 286-291, where an interesting parallel is suggested between the Greek and Islamic spirit of colonization.

longer restrain his dearest heart's desire, namely, to win over Syria and particularly Jerusalem to Islam. And, as success, in this theatre of war, was of greater moment to him than elsewhere, he withdrew Khalid from Persia. And, indeed, the Caliph proved himself to be right in keeping Khalid's forces in reserve for the Syrian campaign. An army from Medina had been sent towards Southern Palestine, and three additional corps to the country east of the Jordon, but after some slight success its advance had stopped. The commanders then asked for reinforcements, and so Khalid was advised to proceed to Syria as quickly as possible with his contingent of 5,000 horsemen.

So excellent, indeed, was the discipline, at that time, in the Muslim army, that Khalid, without the least hesitation, surrendered the chief command to Muthanna, and forthwith by forced marches crossed the Syrian desert. After a journey of five days and five nights, in a perfectly new and trackless country, he reached Damascus. A short reconnoitring expedition southward followed, and then he proceeded to join the three corps which stood before the walls of Bostra. Bostra was thus the first important town that yielded to the Muslim arms. After two other victories over the Byzantines, Khalid, in A.H. 14 (A.D. 635), captured Damascus. But it was the great battle at Yarmuk, in which 100,000 Byzantines fought the Muslims under Khalid, that shattered the military strength of Byzantium. Contemporaneously with these events, under the efficient lead of Amr, the army in the south steadily fought its way to Jerusalem. In A.H. 17 Jerusalem bowed to the victors, and in A.H. 19 and 20 the Muslim troops gained various points on the Mediterranean coast.

In the meantime in A.H. 13 Omar succeeded Abu Bakr. Ever since the recall of Khalid, Muthanna had been in sore distress in Persia. Omar, therefore, summoned the Beduins of South Arabia to arms, and under Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas, sent them to the eastern theatre of war. At Quadisiya, in the neigh-

bourhood of Hira, after three days' fighting, the entire Persian army, under Yazdagerd, sustained a crushing defeat (A.H. 16 ; A.D. 637). This victory placed the whole of Babylon at the feet of the Muslims—Ctesiphon with it. Pursuing the fugitive Persian king, the Muslim army pierced its way to Madain, and in A.H. 21 (642 A.D.) at Nehawand, destroyed the last remnant of Yazdagerd's troops. Unopposed was their onward march. They occupied Ray (Tehran), Hamadan, Ispahan, and with the capture of Istakhar, there lay clear before them the path to Kirman and Khorasan, right up to the Oxus. Like a scroll the kingdom of the Sassanides was rolled up for ever more*. The Eastern Empire was to fare no better. Soon after the conquest of Jerusalem, Amr Ibn Al As proceeded from Syria to Egypt and after a whole year's tussle with the Roman Empire, succeeded, at last, in defeating the garrison of Babylon (old Memphis) at Heliopolis, and in making a flying raid into the Faiyum.† The death of the Emperor Heraclius and the confusion resulting therefrom made the Egyptians despair of Byzantine help. The Patriarch of Alexandria, therefore, concluded with the Arabs (17th September, 642) a treaty, according to which Alexandria passed into the hands of the Muslims, and the whole of Egypt became tributary to Islam. The bordering Byzantine provinces in North Africa thus became defenceless ; with the result that in A.H. 22 fell Barka and Tripolis. From Syria in the beginning of A.H. 21, the Muslims began to push forward to Armenia, Georgia, Adherbaijan, and in A.H. 28 they attacked Cyprus by sea, and captured it. Then there was a pause in the flow of conquest until the year 32 A.H. (655 A.D.), when they renewed their activities in this theatre of war. Armenia was occupied up to the Caucasus, and an attempt was

*For details of the Saracen conquest of Syria and Egypt, see Khuda Bakhsh, *History of Islamic Peoples*, p. 50, note (1). See Gfrorer, *Byzantinische Geschichten*, Vol. II, p. 437 *et seq*. His reasons for the success of the early Muslims are noteworthy. But in this connection we must also read Prof. Bury on *Procopius*, Vol. II, p. 417 *et seq : Later Roman Empire.*

† Muir, *Caliphate*, p. 158 *et seq.*

even made to attack Constantinople. After capturing Rhodes, they proceeded up to Chalcedon, but had to return unsuccessful, on account of a storm which destroyed their fleet.

Thirty years after the death of the Prophet the Empire of Islam extended from Oxus to Syrte, over an area of about half the size of Europe. The first question which a cursory glance at these facts raises, is : how was it possible for a people comparatively inexperienced in the art of warfare to conquer the immense military forces of the civilized countries around them ? However highly we may assess the moral qualities of the Muslim army, that alone was certainly not decisive against the superior experience and training of the Byzantines and Persians. Even the economic causes which greatly lowered moral tone of the Persian army cannot quite satisfactorily explain the success of the Muslim arms. In seeking a solution of this problem we must not overlook the numerical strength, the organization, the equipment of the Muslim army, and the deep social and moral causes working behind it. Compared to the army of earlier days, considerable was the numerical strength of the army that fought under the banner of the Caliphate. For instance, according to a credible report, the four armies which, under Abu Bakr, were sent to Syria, were 55,000 strong. To this army Khalid brought 30,000 from Babylonia and a reserve of 6,000. Seventy thousand were summoned to the battle of Yarmuk—a figure which shows that by the time of this battle the number of troops had literally been doubled in Syria. And we may take it that a similar reinforcement was sent to the army in the eastern theatre of war. True, we should not forget that the majority of the soldiers took with them their families—wives, slaves, clients. The army was not divided into regiments or legions, but was arranged on a tribal basis—every tribe having its own banner, round which the members rallied. Besides the tribal banners there was the standard of the Prophet, of black colour. There were only two

kinds of forces : infantry and cavalry.* The usual weapons of the infantry were shield, lance, sword. Some were given only a sling and bow The chief weapon of the cavalry was a lance, ten yards long. The formation of the army, even under the Prophet, consisted of centre, two wings, a van and a rear-guard, and this arrangement continued in the great conquering campaigns. Such was the army with which Islam, in a few years, built up its immense empire. The Arabs were not quite unfamiliar with the art of warfare. They had had much training in their oft-recurring feuds. Moreover, simple and unsophisticated though they were, compared with the armies of the civilized nations, they were more powerful and had fewer needs, and by reason of the promise of paradise they had no fear of death. Finally, their generals—the unsparing Khalid above all the rest—possessed abilities such as no Persian or Byzantine generals of their time could boast. But, in the course of expansion, manifold military, civil and religious needs pressed for attention. In conquered countries, indeed, the conquerors came to know also needs of an ideal as distinguished from those of a purely practical character.† In the military sphere the need for permanent military stations was first felt and met. Like all administrative measures of Islam this, too, goes back to Omar. When in A.H. 16—after the fall of Jerusalem—he personally visited Syria, he divided the troops into corps, consisting of several tribes, and assigned to them a permanent camp. In Syria permanent military stations were already in existence, and Omar made use of them. They were : Damascus, Tiberias, Lydda, Ramla. In Babylonia, on the other hand, fresh military stations were established. These were : Basra and Kufa.‡

*See Khuda Bakhsh, *Orient under the Caliphs*, Chapter VII, p. 304 *et seq*, the valuable little monograph of Reinand *L'art militaire chez les Arabes* ; the masterly work of Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der Alten Araber* (Leipzig, 1886), and last but not least Professor Oman's *Art of War*.

†Inostranzev, *Iranian Influence on Muslim Literature*, Tr. by Nariman, Bombay.

‡Muir, *Caliphate*, p. 122. See in this connection Sir Charles Lyall's illuminating introduction to the " *Mufaddaliyat.*"

At first when they lived with their families, the soldiers built their barracks of reed, but soon these reed huts gave place to houses of bricks and mortar. Thus out of these two military stations grew prosperous towns which, in course of time, proved to be decisive factors in the cultural development of Islam. The new military station in Egypt was in the neighbourhood of Babylon. Out of it grew the town of Fustat—capital of Egypt until the foundation of Cairo in 975 A.D.

By letting the soldiers live with their families in permanent military camps—a tendency to settled habits imperceptibly stole into the army, and this tendency markedly manifested itself in a craving on their part to acquire landed properties. Already the great plain along the Euphrates and the Tigris—the first scene of Muslim invasion—possessed for the Arabs the allurements of paradise. It is no wonder then that the soldiers claimed to share and to settle down in that fair, smiling land. The tribal chiefs recalled the promises of Omar, and demanded their fulfilment. They claimed a share in the land, in proportion to the strength and importance of the tribe. Others suggested that the country should be treated as booty of war, and that, after deducting a fifth, for the State, both lands and inhabitants should be equally divided among the troops. Had such a division been effected—according to the calculation made at the instance of the Caliph Omar—three peasants would have been the share of each warrior. Or if the country had been partitioned among the Muslims the Muslim army would have been transformed into landowners, and the country, neglected by the former proprietors, now reduced to slavery, and drained by the conquerors, would soon have reverted to waste and desolation.

Momentous was the decision arrived at by Omar—momentous for the growth and development of the Islamic Empire. Omar ruled that the conquered land should be

*See Lane-Poole's little book on *Cairo*.

regarded as an inalienable crown-possession for all time—the produce to be at the disposal of the State for the common good. Thus the inhabitants were left in possession of the land, both in Babylon and Egypt.

An official notification strictly forbade Muslims from engaging in cultivation, and Omar would not even allow the Governor of Egypt—the Commander Amr Ibn Al As—to build a house in the cantonment at Fustat. The prohibition to soldiers regarding landownership was, however, amply compensated by the immense wealth in other respects which flowed from the conquests. It was doubtless due to the Caliphs and their loyal subjects that the example of Mohamed (in distributing the surplus State revenue among the faithful) was scrupulously followed. The wealth that came in from conquered countries steadily augmented.

The share which fell to each Muslim far outweighed the poor-tax which the faithful were under obligation to pay. Poor-tax was usually payable in camels and sheep; and even under the Prophet there was a special State pasturage for animals sent in as payment of poor-tax. The Beduins loved to send in decrepit animals in discharge of this obligation; and although such miserable beasts were not acceptable in theory, they were in fact never refused, for at this period of conquest the poor-tax had become quite illusory, in consequence of the immense revenues received from the subject races.

From what has been said it is clear that the real aim of the Arab campaigns was not the diffusion of Islam, but the seizure of the wealth represented by the neighbouring civilized States.

Following the example of the Prophet, professors of revealed religions—such as Jews and Christians—were allowed, under the protection of the Islamic Empire and on payment of a suitable tax, perfect freedom in their religion. The rest of the people, *i.e.*, the heathen, were unconditionally forced to accept Islam. Soon, however, they realized that it was to the

interest of "Arabism" to concede to "Farsi'ism" privileges, similar to those conceded to Judaism and Christianity. Thus, in spite of its religion, Farsi'ism continued in Persia as against the payment of a tax similar to the one levied on Christians and Jews. Upon the very same principle Othman extended this privilege to the Berber inhabitants of North Africa. They too were allowed freedom in religion as against the payment of a tax. In the face of these facts there is no question of the propagation of Islam by the sword. United by Islam, "Arabism" was interested in conquering and in keeping the conquered as a tax-paying people. But soon the conquered accepted Islam and claimed equality within its Empire. Then came the clash of interests between the Arab and the non-Arab Muslims. According to Omar no foreigner could be placed on a footing of equality with the Arabs. How deliberate was Omar's policy to set up the ascendancy of "Arabism," is clear from his measure to sweep Arabia free of all other faiths than Islam. Without any consideration for the treaties concluded with them, the industrious Jews of Khaibar and the Christian and Jewish population of Najran were expelled, at one stroke, from the Arabian Peninsula. The Jews were banished to Taima, Wadi-ul-Qur'a, and Jericho—the Christians to Babylonia and Syria. Thus Arabia and Islam became twins. To be Arab was to be master and ruler. No Arab, said Omar, could be a slave, either by sale or capture. Between ruler and ruled a sharp dividing line was created. Muslims were forbidden to use foreign languages and Christians to use the Arabic language or the Arabic script. According to the treaty of surrender of the Syrian Christians—approved and amended by Omar—Christians were not to teach their children to read; they were to vacate their seats when a Muslim wanted to sit; they were to toll their bell feebly and to conduct their common prayer in subdued voices—were Muslims near. Even in dress Muslims were to be distinguished from the Christians; indeed, all

subject races from their Arab lords.*

This sharp division between the Arabs and the subject races was necessary to enable the former to enjoy to the fullest extent their privileges as conquerors. Omar had laid down that the surplus revenue was to be divided among the faithful, and it was therefore necessary to differentiate between the giver and the receiver. None but the Arab, in the vast Empire of Islam, could be the receiver of State gifts and possessor of State prerogatives.† Only so long as the Arabs "only" constituted the Islamic Government, did the division of the surplus revenue continue on the lines laid down by Omar. Every Arab, free or a client, even women and children, received a fixed State annuity—the amount being fixed in consideration of near or remote kinship with the Prophet; early or late conversion to Islam; military distinction or special knowledge of the Qur'an. Ayesha, widow of the Prophet, headed the list with 12,000 dirhams—weaned children, 1,000 dirhams each, appeared at the bottom of the list.

To enable the Arabs to enjoy material advantages; to secure to them social distinctions amidst subject races—it was essential to remove cultural disparity between them and the subject races. To such a desire, perhaps, may be ascribed the measures enacted by Omar in Syria. But those measures failed in their effect. From the very beginning the conquerors were utterly unable to take the administration of the conquered countries into their own hands. They had, therefore, no option but to leave the administration to their highly cultured subjects; nay, even to have recourse to them for giving effect to innovations purely Islamic. Even the administration of the State donation pressed home to the Arabs their want of culture and training. Past was the happy time when Omar could say: "I have received a great many good things from Bahrain—shall

*Von Kremer has given reasons in justification of these measures. See my *Social and Political Conditions under the Caliphate.*

† This statement is much too wide. It is not *strictly* correct.

I weigh out or count them to you?" Willing or unwilling even Omar had to adopt the Byzantine financial system for the benefit of the Muslim exchequer. In the Divans (Board of Account) established by Omar in conquered countries the natives—Christians and Persians—kept books in their own languages—Greek and Persian. Only in Medina were the accounts kept in Arabic, but even then according to foreign system; and this was by no means difficult for a once commercial community, familiar with book-keeping, such as the Arabs were.

Nor was the government behindhand in other spheres. Even under the first Caliphs an administrative division of the Empire had become a necessity, and this not merely in conquered countries but also in Arabia itself. Mekka, Taif, Sanaa, Ghorash, Khulan, Najran, Bahrain, even the Oasis of Dumat-ul-Jandal—all received their special governors.* Omar made many changes—suppressed old and established new centres.† With these governorships a temporal colour was given to the old theocracy of Islam. Like the Caliph the Governor too, in the beginning, was an administrator, a tax-gatherer, the Commander-in-Chief, a judge—all rolled into one. But we notice, even in the time of Omar, special judges appointed for important military centres, such as Basra, Kufa, Damascus, Hims.‡ In Medina the Caliph himself was the Chief Judge. Othman, for the first time, associated a judge with himself.

While in the provinces the administration of existing laws continued as before, in Medina arose the first school of pure Muslim jurisprudence. There lived the companions of the Prophet, who treasured and handed down with scrupulous

* See Wustenfeld, *Stadt Mekka*, Vol. IV, p. 117.

† Muir, *Caliphate*, pp. 122, 146. Basra and Kufa were among the new ones.

‡ Sachau, *Zur altesten gesch. des Muhammedanischen Rechts*, p. 704; Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams*, Chapter "Der Qadi," p. 206 *et seq.*

care every word that had fallen from him. Every one of these traditions (Hadith) was a priceless treasure which floated down from generation to generation with the names of the transmitters. These, along with the Qur'an, constituted the oldest sources of the Islamic Law. In course of transmission, however, the old genuine traditions were very considerably mixed up with the forged ones—for immense had become the volume and range of the traditions.

Ibn Masud and Ibn Abbas became the founders of the school of Medina. Ibn Masud was particularly familiar with the mentality of the Prophet, and Ibn Abbas with the judicial decisions of the first three Caliphs. Both of them were intimately acquainted with the Qur'an. In fact, Ibn Abbas is regarded as the founder of the Exegesis of the Qur'an too. Thus, it is obvious that, in their inception, jurisprudence and theology were closely knit together. The fountain of all law and justice was the Qur'an. To know and precisely to understand its text was thus the first need alike of a judge and a theologian. In that age to know the Qur'an was tantamount to being at once a jurist and a theologian and the seven jurists of Medina—the products of the school of Abbas and Masud—were, in point of fact, as many theologians as well. The interest in the text of the Qur'an gradually spread to the people at large. This was only in accordance with the democratic spirit of Islam, which sought to place all Muslims in a position to read the Holy Book. With this end in view they gave early attention to "public instruction" which—true enough—did not go beyond the reading of the Qur'an. However one-sided, it was very creditable in the seventh century.* That the Muslims established such schools for public instruction, not only in Arabia but even in conquered countries, is an achievement

*I have in my possession a MS. of Dr. Goldziher's lecture on *Muslim Education* which he very kindly sent me some years ago, to read at the anniversary of my father's death. It is a valuable paper, and, I hope, soon, to translate it into English. See in this connection, Snouck Hurgronje *Mekka*, Vol. II, pp 200-294.

against which neither classical antiquity nor early Christianity has anything to show. Thus, so common became the knowledge of, and so universal the interest in the written text of the Qur'an, that under Omar the soldiers of Babylonia and Syria who met in Armenia frequently fought over isolated texts.

The Caliph Othman was, therefore, compelled to issue an authorized text of the Qur'an. Zaid Ibn Thabit, who had been the Secretary of the Prophet, was commissioned by the Caliph to prepare the official text. Zaid acquainted himself well of the task, and put forth a perfectly trustworthy collection. Several copies were made from this text—scrupulously accurate copies—and sent out to the provincial capitals for use and guidance. All private copies of earlier times were collected together and burnt.

Thus, in the bosom of Arabism, out of Islam itself, grew the needs which, in due season, led to intellectual bloom and efflorescence. And with the civilized countries—Persia, Syria, Egypt and Asia Minor, then provinces of the Muslim Empire—the entire culture of the subject races lay at the feet of the Arabs, to accept, to absorb, to make their own. In Greek, Syriac, Coptic and Persian garbs we encounter a definite intellectual movement which we may best describe as Christian Hellenism. Decisive alike for Islam and Hellenism was the incorporation of this culture in the youthful Arab Empire. The Hellenistic culture was revived, re-animated, by changed circumstances, by contact with "Arabism ; " and by an intellectual clash with a new religion—akin in thought and tendencies. While such was the effect on Hellenism, Islam and Arabism, on the other hand, after a century of wrestling and combat, were taken captive by the superior culture of the conquered races. To Hellenism Arabism furnished its language, and supplied opportunities for wide diffusion ; whereas Hellenism repaid its debt to Islam with its wealth of science and art. Long before the Arabs made acquaintance with Hellenistic culture they, as might be expected, became familiar with

Hellenistic art and architecture. In Ctesiphon, in Damascus, in Jerusalem, in Egypt, the Muslim army saw and admired the architectural splendour, the textile art, the jeweller's skill; and these plastic and artistic creations awoke in the Arabs a desire to compete for and to possess such achievements themselves. Unlike other unsophisticated peoples—far from destroying, the Arabs preserved these artistic treasures, and sought to copy them in their own way.

In Damascus they found the Church of St. John—a splendid architectural achievement. Built on the foundation of a heathen temple, the church, with its magnificent porch of Corinthian columns and richly-adorned architraves; with its cupola arching the nave and the gold gleaming mosaics on the walls within and partly without—made a deep impression on the conquerors. This fact is evidenced by the decision, straightaway made, to perform the common prayer there. But they felt that they were not altogether justified in completely removing the Christians—so they resolved to share the building with them. They took the Eastern side for themselves; and thus, through one portal, passed henceforth both Muslims and Christians to perform their devotion. In Jerusalem the Muslims searched for the Temple of Solomon—so fondly spoken of by the Prophet—the place whither the Prophet was taken, one night (the night of the Meraj). When Omar reached Jerusalem he wished to be taken to this Temple, but, at the spot where once the Temple was, he found nothing but a dust-heap. But the Prophet could not have made a mistake—so another spot, near the present Church of St. Mary, was declared to be the place of the Prophet's nocturnal journey, and was, accordingly, appropriated for Islam. In Egypt, where the Arabs met with stout resistance, and where, according to the terms of the treaty, they were bound to let the Christians remain in possession of their churches, and in no way to interfere with their affairs or with their worship, the Muslims made their first attempt to build a Mosque for

themselves, and this was done through the help of Christian architects. It was the Amr Mosque of Cairo.

While, in the newly-acquired countries, foreign influences on Arab intellect bore flower and fruit, in Mekka and Medina the old suppressed fire of family and tribal jealousy broke forth afresh. With Othman the Mekkan aristocracy came to the helm of the State and attained supremacy even in Medina. With alarm and indignation the old war companions of the Prophet saw a new and different spirit—a positively worldly spirit—encroaching into and establishing itself in the holy towns. Ever since the flow of immense wealth into Mekka and Medina, they had become the home and hearth of pleasure and gaiety. Music found a congenial home there, and, as early as the middle of the first century of the Hegira, Mekka and Medina became the seminary of Arab music and song. Rich men of Mekka purchased Greek and Persian singing-girls for fabulous sums. From Persia, too, came the art of singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments. The refinement of poetry kept pace with the growth of luxury ; and truly delightful is the Mekkan poetry of this period. In the worship and adoration of women it even excels the efforts of the Troubadours. The heart of Islam—the neighbourhood of the Kaba—thus became the artistic centre of the Muslim Empire, the home and the hearth of music and song.

The reaction of the pious led to the murder of the Caliph Othman, and to an embittered strife for the Caliphate. The most honourable companions of the Prophet strove for the Caliphate, and one of the aspirants, Ali, transferred the seat of government from Medina to Kufa. The flow of conquest stopped. Insurrections threatened in all parts of the Empire, and for the Caliphate no other title but force now prevailed. Victory rested with one of the scions of the proudest house of Mekka—Muawiya, the Governor of Syria. With Muawiya the spirit of the old Arabism—the spirit of Mekka—triumphed and dominated throughout Islam.

CHAPTER IV

THE OMAYYADS

WITH the murder of Othman, say the Arabs, the door of trouble was opened, never to close again. The real cause lay in the conflict between the Islamic and the Arab outlook. Mohamed had made no arrangements for a successor; but, on his death, the necessity for one became only too obvious, and the more the kingdom of Islam grew the more pressing became this necessity. Settled for the Muslims, then, was the question of a successor, and equally so the question of the extent of his power. Every Muslim was deemed eligible for the Caliphate—the most honoured among them being, of course, chosen. This conception corresponded to the democratic spirit of Islam. But it was not the general Muslim opinion of the Medinites. The rest remained Arabs in the old sense of the word. Unaffected they continued their views regarding their duties to the family and the tribe. For them there could be no other title to the Caliphate than kinship with the Prophet, or kinship with the most distinguished of Arab families. Such was the trend of thought in Arabia—pre-eminently so at Mekka.

Now it so happened that the Medinites themselves had chosen Othman as Caliph. To the pious electors he was naught but an old, honoured companion and son-in-law of the Prophet, and as such their choice fell upon him. To the Mekkans, however, Othman was a member of the most distinguished family of Mekka—the family of Omayya. And in the true spirit of the Mekkans did Othman feel and act. He was an Omayyad first and foremost; and, therefore, to fill up the high offices of Government with his kinsmen, appeared the most natural thing to him. This partisan spirit—this

spirit of nepotism—provoked resentment, and Othman eventually fell a victim to the wrath of the Medinite coterie, consisting of the austere and sorely-stricken faithful. Thus, within the Empire itself, there arose a deep line of cleavage between the party of the Medinites, with their democratic conception of the Caliphate, and the party of the Mekkans, with their rigid view of the family and the tribe. These divergent views led to the bloody wars which followed the death of Othman, for thirty years diverting the strength of Islam from its frontiers, to be frittered away in conflicts at home.

The murder of Othman was a signal for Civil War. To curse Othman was the watchword of the Medinite—to call for vengeance for his blood the war-cry of the Mekkan. The first phase of hostilities ended with the victory of Ali—the Medinite candidate—as against the Mekkan Talha and Zubair. But by far the most important for the development of Islam was the second phase—the war between Ali and the Governor of Syria, Muawiya. In the course of this conflict two parties arose in the army of Ali, which quickly assumed religious colours, and which have continued as religious sects, up to the present day. One of these cut itself adrift from the army of Ali, and clamoured for reversion to the old theocracy of Islam—claiming the right to elect and depose Caliphs. The other—loyal to Ali—emphasised the hereditary right to succession to the Caliphate, and thus paved the way for the strict dynastic conception of the Shias, which, to this day, is lovingly cherished in Persia and Mesopotamia. In 641 A.D. Ali fell to the dagger of an assassin. In 680 A.D. his son Husain perished at Kerbala. Although, after the death of Ali, the Omayyads were virtually the rulers of the Islamic Empire, they had yet to fight for thirty years to secure complete recognition. Scarcely had Husain been removed from the scene when Abdullah, the son of Zubair, set himself up as a rival Caliph against the Omayyads. It taxed the entire strength of the Omayyad Caliph Abdul Malik to conquer Abdullah, which he did in A.H. 72 (692 A.D.)

Not until 73 A.H.—after thirty-three years of struggle—did the Omayyad rule become firm and secure.

Now let us glance at the internal conditions.

In Ibn Zubair passed away the last champion of the old faith, and representative of Medina. About this time Medina herself was fast losing her importance. Ten years later her fate was sealed. Believing that by bringing the Medinites into closer touch with the court, he would appease or end the hatred of the pious, the Omayyad Governor, in A.H. 62 (682 A.D.), sent nine distinguished "Ansar" (Helpers) to Damascus. They were received with honour and given rich presents. Their demands were sympathetically listened to. Nevertheless, the pious visitors saw in the Caliph naught but a man without faith, a slave to drink and dancing girls, fond of dogs and riotous revelry. And such was their report at Medina. Soon after, all Medina rose in revolt, and the Omayyads and their supporters were driven out of the town.

The reaction was not long in coming. An army of 12,000 strong appeared before the walls of Medina, and, after a severe fight, defeated the "Ansar" and the "Muhajirin." The victory was signalized by a fearful devastation of the town, and a merciless massacre of the inhabitants. Medina, henceforth, ceases to be the intellectual and spiritual focus of Islam, and with the sun of Medina sets the sun of the true Islam of the Prophet. That Islam, however, is not altogether unaccountable for its fate. On the one hand Islam strove to transform the Arabs into true Muslims far too suddenly; and on the other it strove to call a halt to the development which was inevitable within Islam itself. Neither the one nor the other was possible. The various component parts of the Empire—the various nations comprised therein, nay, every important town—all followed of necessity their own independent paths of development; and not until a remoter age did the common element emerge and a common tie unite them all again. Even before the Omayyad rule Mekka had begun to

use its immense wealth for purposes of pleasure and amusement. Under the Omayyads it went further and further on this path, and ended by becoming the central hearth of the joy and gaiety of the Islamic Empire.* Above all, it became and remained the centre of music and song.† The impulse coming from Persia found a warm response in Mekka. Sons of rich Mekkans squandered fabulous sums on musicians of either sex, and the Court of Damascus looked for supply, in this direction, to Mekka. In singing, with all its accompaniments, women did not lag behind men. And these women set the fashion in dress, and wherever they are referred to their dresses are minutely described and lavishly praised. We are told of one that she used to hold receptions and entertain guests in great style and in a striking toilette, and, to make the setting suitable to the occasion, was wont to dress up her slaves in garments of variegated colours. The advent of these female singers tended to lower the position of women. High, indeed, was the status of women in the earliest times, and unhampered was their freedom. Socially, intercourse with them was common, nor were cases of ladies receiving male friends unknown or infrequent. Ever chivalrous had been the attitude of the Arabs towards women, and wherever "Arabism" was not affected by central Asiatic influences—in Spain, for instance—that chivalrous attitude continued unimpaired. To kill or even injure a woman was reckoned the most dishonourable of acts, and the oldest Islamic Law of War would not sanction the killing of enemy women and children—even though they were of other than Islamic faith. Thus does an Omayyad poet charmingly express himself: "Our lot (*i.e.*, man's lot) is to kill or be killed or be taken captive—woman's part is gracefully to

* Von Kremer's chapter on Damascus is still by far the best account of the Omayyad social life. See my *Orient under the Caliphs*, p. 130 *et seq.*

† Khuda Bakhsh, *Islamic Civilization*, pp. 13, 14, 88. I have dealt fully with this subject there. See also *Orient under the Caliphs*, Chapter II.

manage her train."*

At a time when the West knew not what love-poetry was —in Arabia it had attained its culminating point. The prince of this form of poetry was Omar Ibn Rabia.† His poems were in every one's mouth, and happily some have come down to us. In language of intense passion and exquisite felicity he sang and immortalized his love, which not only claimed the most distinguished contemporaries but even the very princesses of the House of Omayya. In him we have a foretaste, and hear the accent, of Heinrich Heine.

Towards the end of the Omayyad rule, when free intercourse between the sexes may have degenerated into secret love and intrigues, we are suddenly confronted with the rise of the "Harem system" and the rule of eunuchs. The fact, however, that the eunuch trade was in the hands of the Byzantines, satisfactorily shows that neither Islam nor Arabism was responsible for the position of women as it later shaped itself. In Mekka—the seat of pure Arabism—the position of women remained high and honourable, despite the vicissitudes of the times. But we should not forget that "Arabism" had inherited from Islam nothing more than the conviction of its "imperial sway and its destiny to enjoy all the good things of the Earth, as then envisaged."

The character of those towns which had sprung up in Babylonia out of military cantonments—the towns of Basra and Kufa—stands in sharp contrast to that of the old Arab commercial town—so little affected by changed circumstances.

Here, in consequence of the conquering campaigns, a new world had come into being. The contact between the Arabs and the gifted Persian population stirred the Arabs to their depths, and transformed them, so to speak, into a new

*Perron, *Femmes Arabes.* (Paris, 1858.)

†See *Orient under the Calipha*, p. 43, and Schwarz's charming monograph, *Umar Ibn Abi Rabia.* (Leipzig, 1893.) See also Prof. Mackail's *Arabian Lyric Poetry* in his *Lectures on Poetry.* (Longmans & Co., 1914.)

special race of men. The rapid growth of these towns—about 50 A.H. each counted 150,000 to 200,000 inhabitants—and the stimulating influence of the Persians called forth a lively intellectual movement ; and thus Basra and Kufa became the most animated intellectual centres of Islam. The intermediary position—geographically and intellectually—which they held between Medina and Damascus tended to promote egotism and to foster a spirit of independence. Therefore no authority there was immune from challenge—whereas every rebel was sure of a hearing. Just as they upheld freedom in politics, so also they upheld independence of thought in the domains of art and science. Here, earlier than elsewhere, attention was directed to the scientific study of the Arabic language. The contact between Persian and Arabic on the one hand, and the deviations between the language of the Qur'an and the vernacular on the other, evoked this linguistic and philological activity. Not altogether free from doubts is the question as to who were the pioneers in the field of Arabic philology. It is probable that foreigners—notably Persians—did the groundwork of this branch of knowledge ; but, be it noted, in no case could it have been done without the material co-operation of the Arabs.

No less striking is the general intellectual activity in Basra in the beginning of the second century of the Hegira. We see a small circle formed, where political and religious questions of the day were considered and discussed. They argued the credibility of Islam ; the excellence of Buddhism ; the doctrine of Predestination ; and a certain Wasil Ibn Ata laid the foundation of a school of Rationalism. It is, alas ! but a dim light that chance sheds on the earliest free, intellectual activities of Islam. But, faint though the light be, it suffices to reveal the fact that the "craving for knowledge and truth" had indubitably been awakened among them. While in Mekka the old Arab traditions steadfastly held their ground, and the old Arab tendencies became more and more marked, life and

activities in the new towns of Babylonia showed a new form of "Arabism." It seemed as though a new race-type had come to life : proud and frank, far-sighted, but full of fun, like the old Arabs of Hijaz, but more cosmopolitan in tone and temper. The inhabitants of Basra and Kufa had broken with the conservatism of their forefathers, whose customs and habits had hitherto been the unassailable touchstone of excellence. Now, they themselves set out on a voyage of intellectual discovery.*

*" Al-Kufa, the northernmost of the two military colonies founded by the Caliph Omar for the domination of the great Mesopotamian plain, was, during the period of Omayyad and early Abbasid rule, a place where the work of collecting and recording the poetry of the pre-Islamite time was pursued with ardour. Both Al-Kufa and Al-Basra were situated on the borders of cultivation, with the healthy highland of the Desert behind them, in the immediate neighbourhood of ancient sites which for centuries had been points of resort familiar to the nomad tribes. The former was in close proximity to Al-Hira, the famous capital of the Lakhmite kings, which lay three miles to the south, while Al-Basra was only a few miles inland from Al-Ubullah, an ancient mart on the united stream of the Euphrates and Tigris, commanding the great trade routes east and west, north and south, by land and water. These two centres were the places where the armies of Islam, drawn from the tribes of the peninsula were collected for their annual campaigns for the extension of the faith into the empires of Byzantium and Persia, and when the latter had fallen, into Central Asia. Thus both war and commerce brought to Al-Kufa and Al-Basra tribes from the remotest parts of Arabia, and many of their chiefs took up their abode permanently there. The study of the Arabic language, its word stock and grammar, had, early in the life of the new Dominion, become the care of the religious heads of Islam. The Caliph, Ali, who made Al-Kufa his headquarters, is said to have been the first to insist upon the necessity of taking special measures for maintaining the purity of the language of the Qur'an, which was in danger of being lost by the deterioration of the speech of the Arabs who had settled among the Aramaic-speaking populations of Mesopotamia ; and under his direction the earliest Arabic grammar is alleged to have been drawn up by Abu-l-Aswad of Du'il, a section of the tribe of Kinanah. After this first impulse, interest in the subject spread rapidly. Both Al-Kufa and Al-Basra became the headquarters of a school of active grammatical and linguistic research, for the supply of which the national stores of poetry, preserved in the memory of the tribal traditionists or *Rawis*, were drawn upon. In the pre-Islamite period Al-Hira (adjacent to Al-Kufa) had been the resort of numerous poets who composed odes in praise of the Lakhmite kings, and it is said that a volume containing some of the works of the most eminent poets, and specially poems in praise of the last king, An-Numan, and his predecessors had been preserved in the family of the Lakhmite princes, and passed into the hands of the Omayyad House of Merwan. It was natural

Among the conquered towns of culture Damascus alone enjoyed the glory of being raised to the seat of Government. In Mesopotamia and Egypt—however much the governors might like the old towns—they had to reside in the newly-established cantonments and build afresh.

In Damascus the Semitic Arabs came into contact with a civilization which was akin to their own—the Aramaic civilization. The delightful town, close to the edge of the desert, with rippling streams and shady nooks, exactly suited their taste. With extraordinary rapidity grew the Arab population. In the year 710 A.D. it numbered 120,000. For the proud, pleasure-seeking Omayyads, no place could be more welcome or more happily attuned to their mentality than Damascus. Byzantium supplied articles of luxury; Mekka—musicians; Basra and Kufa—fruits of the mind. Nor were the Arabs slow in their appreciation of things of art and beauty. But unaided they could not shine in æsthetic creations. Byzantine art laid its spell upon them, and to that spell they yielded. Forthwith they sought and obtained Byzantine aid. The Caliph Abdul Malik caused a cupola to be erected on the Temple at Jerusalem (wrongly called the Omar Mosque), which, with the addition of later times, is today, by far the finest architectural monument of the world. His successor Walid could not resist the temptation of appropriating the Church of St. John (which, hitherto, had been equally shared by Muslims and Christians), and, transforming it into a beautiful mosque. Already " these buildings show deviations and departures from their Hellenistic models, indicating thereby the rise of a new, original art, purely Islamic." How this happened—regard being had to the fact that all

that poetry-research should be most active at Kufa. But at both places the evolution of grammar and lexicography was pursued with energy, and considerable rivalry existed in the early Abbasid period: the school of Baghdad, which finally became the standard, was built upon the foundations of both, with a leaning towards the system of Basra rather than that of its rival."—Lyall, Introduction to the *Mufaddiliyat*, pp. xi-xii.

architectural work was in the hands of the subject races—is still an unsolved mystery ! Unfortunately, of the palaces of the Omayyads nothing has survived. But the pleasure-castles which have recently been discovered in the Syrian desert, and which are traced to the Omayyads, testify to their endeavour to make them as lovely and beautiful as was possible in those far-off days. In the account of an Arab reporter we find the prototype of all later Arab palaces. "We came," says he, "to a great palace which was floored with green marble. In the midst of the courtyard stood a great basin, with an unceasing flow of water which watered the garden. In the garden were all kinds of lovely plants and shady trees and birds that sang the sweetest, rapturous notes. The splendour of the palace was in keeping with the pageant of the court." What a mighty change from the early days of the Caliphate ! Mohamed had worn no token of his high office—nor was he in any way distinguished in his dress from the rest of the simple Arabs. And so had it been with Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali. But it was to be different now. The first two Omayyad Caliphs, who still conducted the five daily prayers and delivered the Friday Sermon, appeared, on these occasions, dressed absolutely in white—head covered with a pointed cap—a signet and a sceptre-like staff in hand. Dressed in a style more gorgeous still were the Caliphs on other public occasions. When holding receptions the Caliph sat on the throne with crossed legs, surrounded by his paternal and maternal relations, his brothers and sons—separated at a suitable distance from the officials, clients, poets and petitioners. The first Omayyads were active, competent rulers, who devoted a large portion of the day to administrative work. Evenings and nights were set apart for amusement. In the beginning they loved to hear historical recitals—preferably South Arabian legends. To this were added poetical recitations. But soon innocent amusements passed into questionable enjoyments. Musicians were summoned from Mekka, and cider and rose-sherbet, which in

the beginning had satisfied their cravings, were now exchanged for wine. Yazid I was almost always in a state of intoxication. The great Abdul Malik gave himself up to wine once a month, and like the Romans used to have recourse to emetics to empty his stomach. His son Walid, under whom the Islamic Empire attained its widest sway, held drinking carouses every second day, and the Caliph Hisham—the last great prince of the House of Omayya—every Friday after divine service. These feasts were not, however, without significance to Arab culture. They meant opportunities for artists and poets to display their talents before the Caliph. According to the Persian custom, separated from the guests and artists and poets by a transparent curtain—let down in the middle of the saloon—sat the Caliph, listening to music and song. In time this love of music and song degenerated into a sickly, morbid, demoralising passion. Yazid II, it is reported, fell into such an ecstasy, on one occasion, at the song of the Mekkan musician Ma'bad, that he sprang to his feet and danced round the saloon. Walid II, who lived in his pleasure-castle in the Syrian desert, used, while the music was on, to sit in a large saloon, in the midst of which was a huge basin, half filled with water and half with wine. So overpowered was he, at times, at the songs of Ma'bad, that he would fling his mantle aside, jump into the basin, and have a mouthful of wine out of it. Slaves, then, would rush up to him with fresh garments, perfume and ointment, and the whole scene would close with lavish presents to the singer, with an injunction to keep the incident for ever under the seal of secrecy.

Walid II was not only fond of music and song : he was a good musician for himself. He wrote poetry, played on the lute, composed, and his attainments were distinctly of a high order. Like him, highly-gifted were most of the Caliphs of the House of Omayya. They showed interest in and gave encouragement to all forms of intellectual activities. It is no wonder, then, that in such conditions and circumstances learning should have thriven.

But, alas! in the political turmoil and tumults of the succeeding centuries everything that was done in the domain of science and art perished—never perhaps to be recovered. We know nothing more than the mere names of the heralds and pioneers of the Arab culture of this age. Of Yazid, an Omayyad prince (d. 704), we know that, instructed by a monk, he busied himself with the study of alchemy, and wrote three works on that subject. The first of these works dealt with his teacher and his instructions. We are entirely in the dark as to the beginnings of the study of the natural sciences among the Arabs. Even of the beginnings of historical studies we only know this much, that the Omayyads helped and encouraged such studies by their interest in South Arabian songs and legends.*

The two South-Arabians who were summoned to the Court of Damascus to relate the history of the kings of Yemen and narrate biblical legends were busy literary men. One of them, Abid Ibn Shariyya, composed a *Book of Kings* and of *Past History* which was very much in demand in the first century of Islam. The other—according to the statement of Arab bibliography—wrote books on the Wars of the Prophet, on the Diffusion of Islam, and on the Israelites. A third writer of the same age is said to have written no less than 32 treatises, of which only the titles have come down to us. A Medinite—traditionist, jurist, theologian—wrote at the Court of Damascus a book on the first Wars of Islam, and his pupil Al-Amiri is the first and the oldest known author of a work on *Tradition*—still to be seen in MS. at Cairo. We also possess a MS. of a small collection of the Sayings of the Prophet, and we know that collections of Maxims and Proverbs were industriously made at the time of the Omayyads. Most congenial, indeed, was the soil of Damascus for theology.

*Von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte des Orients*, Vol. II, p. 414 *et seq. Die Orientalischen Literaturen*, p. 150 (Berlin and Leipzig, 1906); Wustenfeld, *Die Geschichtschreiben der Araber*, p. 8.

The Christians were held in high esteem at court, and the father of the last great theologian of the Greek Church—John of Damascus—was a favourite of the Caliph Abdul Malik. Peaceful exchange of ideas between Muslims and Christians was thus inevitable. It was in such circumstances that John could pen an apology for Christianity, and so influence Muslim thought as to lead to the formation of numerous sects.*

Thus we see how theology owed its rise to Christian inspiration—historical learning to Persian influences—jurisprudence to the legal systems of the subject races. However slight and slender the remnant, it is impossible to overrate the value and importance of the intellectual work done under the Omayyads. Of this intellectual activity we find in Omayyad poetry the clearest proof. That most of the poets should dedicate themselves to singing praises of the Caliphs is not in any way surprising, nor is it surprising either that a Christian poet—Akhtal—should be a favourite of the Caliph of his time; for were not the Omayyads tolerant, large-hearted, liberal-handed?

Apart from court poetry, thousands of verses have come down to us, revealing to the expert the Omayyad period in all its manifold phases. Unfortunately those verses—priceless for historical and linguistic purposes—are clothed in language at once so obscure and concentrated, that even their translation yields but little meaning to the layman. To the expert, however, they are an invaluable mine, an inestimable source of information of the life and mentality of "Arabism." More distinctly than elsewhere do we see in this contemporary poetry the vices of "Arabism" steadily overlaying Islam: family spirit and tribal partisanship. The bulk of this poetry consists of satires against particular tribes—half-heathens and half-Muslims. The poets—as may be expected—are far from intimate with the details and particulars of Beduin life than

*See the Eng. tr. of Ibn Tahir al-Baghdadi's book on *Muslim Schisms and Sects* (New York, 1920). (The author died in 1037.)

with the foreign cultures encompassing them. Most striking, and, from the point of view of cultural history, most significant, is the role of the poets in the Empire of the Omayyads. The poets then filled the same position as the party press does today. Every party (that is to say, every tribal group) had its own special bard, who composed satires against its enemies, and penned panegyrics on its friends, and these compositions became the common property of all Arabs. To be glorified by a poet was the ambition of the individual and the tribe—to be ridiculed, was an engrossing, haunting fear. Even the richest and the most powerful heavily subsidized these guides of public opinion, to keep them on the right side. Many a poet waged a life-long war against another—many concluded alliances to combat a common foe. Praises of distinguished men ; panegyrics on the heroes of the day ; condemnation of the weak and the cowardly—set down in verses—flew from lip to the extreme corners of the Muslim Empire. Contemporary poetry is thus the index to the storm that raged within the bosom of Arabism, and is, perhaps, the most reliable source of information regarding the strength of the various parties, at different stages of the Omayyad rule—so rich and conspicuous in warfare*.

The impression which this poetry conveys is the impression of a tumultuous, stormy time. Not only do sects wrangle and imperil the safety of Islam, but tribal jealousy threatens the very existence of the Empire. Precisely, as in old Arabia, branches of individual tribes, or the entire tribes themselves,

*Sir Charles Lyall first called attention to the importance of Arab poetry as a source of historical information. His paper on the subject is a valuable piece of constructive work, which will, perhaps, be made a basis of extensive research by some scholar of a future day. Prof. Browne, in the fourth volume of his *Literary History of Persia*, has done for Persian what Sir Charles did for Arab poetry. He has shown how significant is the light which Persian poetry sheds on Persian history and civilization. And, to be sure, what a revealing light would contemporary Muslim poetry in India throw on the Muslim feeling towards British rule, if only someone had *the courage* to undertake its editing.

fought each other, so now the two great tribal groups—the North and South Arabians—stand implacably opposed to each other, bent on mutual destruction. In Syria fought the Kais and the Kalb—in Babylonia the Tamim and the Azd.* The first Omayyad managed to prevent the seething hatred from breaking into bloody violence. But after his death things changed, and the tribal hatred became a decisive and destroying factor in Muslim politics. The name of the Kais or the Kalb was now associated with every ruler, and often and often the governors of the new Caliph committed most cruel excesses against the partisans of the deceased Caliph. In reading the poetry of this age we are transported into the days of pure, unalloyed heathenism. Not a trace is visible of that fundamental idea of Islam—its supreme glory : " the brotherhood of the faithful," and the horror of shedding Muslim blood. Only the scene of activity is widened. It is not Arabia alone but the wide, wide Muslim Empire which now becomes the theatre for the indulgence of untamed jealousy, wild passion, fratricidal warfare.

That this internecine warfare wrecked the Omayyad Empire need not surprise us. But precisely at this time—when internal dissensions were disintegrating the Muslim Empire—Arabism was silently assimilating the subdued races. The high wall raised earlier by the Arabs could not endure for ever. It was bound to break down, and it did. The subject races saw but one path to salvation, and that path lay in conversion to Islam. Naught but conversion could relieve them of the burden of the Capitation-tax (*Khiraj*) and other equally heavy burdens imposed by the conquerors. And to conversion they resorted as the only means of escape from these impositions. Just as on the part of the Arabs fiscal reasons were more effective than religious, so also was it with the subject races in the matter of conversion. At this period,

*These were most important subdivisions of the North and South Arabian tribes.

to be a " Muslim " was tantamount to being an " Arab."

Persians, Syrians, Copts and Berbers adopted the Arabic language, and freely placed their talents and learning at the disposal of the conquerors. Henceforward the nationality of the Muslim recedes into the background. Whether Persian or Syrian or Egyptian—he poses as an Arab. Thus, in the sequel, we understand by an " Arab " a Muslim who wrote and spoke Arabic.* This is the most significant event in the history of Islamic civilization, and, perhaps, the most incontestable proof of the importance of the Arab mission in that age. Persians and Byzantines and Copts had fallen into an incurable lethargy, and were wholly incapable, of their own initiative, of advancing along the path of progress. Contact with the Arabs shook off this lethargy, and awakened them to fresh intellectual life.

In the vortex of bloody confusion the germ of the old culture—transplanted into a new soil—shoots forth into fresh life ; and the moment the storm subsides, and the star of the Omayyads sets, and that of the Abbasides lights the horizon, an efflorescence—at once immense and splendid—greets the eye.

*This suggests a striking parallel to the case of Eurasians in India.

CHAPTER V

BAGHDAD

Just as, in the seventh century, the teachings of Mohamed united under one common religious idea the different nations of Asia and North Africa, so also, about the middle of the eighth century, such a union was effected in Europe under one common Christian idea. Round one banner, as it were—that of the Papacy—had gathered together Italy, France, Germany. In large measure this union was born of an apprehended danger from Islam to Central Europe.* Since the beginning of the eighth century, the Arabs, reinforced by the Berbers, had been steadily pushing westwards. The Visigoths had been overthrown, and the Muslim army had penetrated into Gaul, where, in A.D. 732, by his victory at Tours, Charles Martel set a limit to their advance. The commanding position which Charles and his family thereupon attained, and which decided the development of Central Europe, was the result of this great military triumph.

Precisely at that critical juncture, when the destiny of world-history was in the balance, a revolution broke out in Islam's own bosom, ending the dynasty of the Omayyads—a dynasty representative of the virtues and vices of an old Mekkan family. And what were they ?—feud and hatred, untamed, irrepressible. The old " Arabism " was once again plunged into anarchy and strife. The Caliphs, no longer regarded as successors of the Prophet, were looked upon merely as the chiefs of the North and South Arabian tribes—naught but princes of the noble House of Omayya. While the Omayyad Caliphs abandoned themselves to pleasure or party

*Ranke was the first to point out this aspect of the case.

faction, another family of Mekka—that of Hashim—sought to revive the Caliphate in the religious sense of the term. Already, about the middle of the Omayyad rule, the family of the Abbasides, *i.e.*, the descendants of Abbas, uncle of the Prophet, so won the esteem and confidence of the orthodox as to arouse the fears of the Omayyads. And these fears assumed greater and greater dimensions when, under Walid II, there was a split in the House of Omayya itself, and yet greater fears still, when the most distinguished general of the ruling family definitely went over to the Abbasides.

The " Imam," *i.e.*, the foreman—so the representative of the new dynasty styled himself—had made over a black flag to Abu Muslim, who, under this banner, fought the Omayyads in Kufa, in distant Khorasan, and finally conquered them in a two days' battle at Mosul. The last of the Omayyads, Merwan II, fled to Egypt, where he prepared himself for one more desperate fight. He lost, and his head was sent to Abbas, who opened the line of the Abbaside Caliphs.*

Once again to the helm of the State, came a Mekkan family who, as kinsmen of the Prophet, were expected to carry on his traditions and to fulfil his destiny. But, in reality, nothing was further from their thoughts than the rehabilitation of the oldest form of the Caliphate. The ultimate goal of these efforts was the establishment of a despotism modelled upon the Persian " Chosroism."

Not feeling very secure in the midst even of their most loyal subjects—the inhabitants of Basra and Kufa—even after the pitiless destruction of all but one member of the Omayyad family who escaped across Africa to Spain,† they resolved to found a new capital of their own. ‡ The position and the plan of this new capital reveal best the new era that had set in.

*Weil, *Islamitiche Volker*, p. 127 *et seq.* (Translated into English by me in the *Calcutta Review*).

†*Ibid*, p. 256 *et seq.*

‡The towns of Babylonia—Kufa, Basra, Anbar—did not quite please them for their capital.

It is said that Mansur caused workmen to be brought together from Syria and Mosul, from Persia and from Babylonia, as also architects and land-surveyors; and over all he appointed four chief overseers, one of these being the Imam Abu Hanifah, well known as the founder of the Hanifites, the earliest of the four schools of orthodox Sunni theology . . . . The plan of the city was first traced out on the ground with lines of cinders, and, to mark it the better, all along the outline they set balls of cotton saturated with naphtha, and then set these on fire. On the lines thus marked were dug the foundations of the double walls, with a deep ditch outside, filled with water, and a third innermost wall round the central area, the whole thus forming concentric circles, four equidistant gateways being left in each of the circuits of the walls. Of these gates two, the Kufa Gate (S.W.) and the Basra Gate (S.E.) both opened on the Sarat Canal; the Khorasan Gate (N.E.) was on the Tigris, leading to the Main Bridge of Boats; while the Syrian Gate (N.W.) led to the high road of Anbar, which came down along the northern or left bank of the upper Sarat Canal. As the Muslim writers remark, the main feature of the city of Mansur was that it was circular, with four equidistant gates, and this was a novelty in Islam, probably derived from Persia. Externally from gate to gate it measured 5,000 ells, or about 2,500 yards, and this gives us a diameter for the outer circle round the ditch of nearly 3,200 yards.* The walls of Baghdad were built with sun-dried bricks of extraordinary size. Of the double walls the inner was the higher, and sufficiently broad to be of the nature of a rampart. According to one account this, the main wall, was ninety feet high, and, at its foundations, measured 105 feet across (another account giving the lower width at 90 ells, or 135 feet, but this appears to be a clerical error), while, at the summit, it narrowed to 37½ feet. The outer wall was, by all accounts,

*Guy Le Strange's *Baghdad* has been largely used here. See Chapter II—especially pp. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23 and 26.

less massive in its construction, and apparently it is this wall whose dimensions are given by Tabari as 75 feet across at the foundations, narrowing to 30 feet at the summit, with a height that may be set down at about 60 feet. In the outer wall the four gates were of divers origins: the Khorasan Gate which had been brought from Syria, was said to be of Pharaonic workmanship; the Kufa Gate had been made in that city by a certain Khalid, son of Abdallah, a Muslim craftsman; the Syrian Gate, recognized as being the weakest of the four, was constructed in Baghdad by the order of Mansur; lastly, where the Basra Gate came from is not known. Any one entering the city of Mansur would, after crossing the ditch which encircled the outer wall, pass in by one of these four gates, from each of which a thoroughfare led directly to the great central area. Each of the four gateways of the outer wall was surmounted by a great gate-house, the hall or passage-way of which was flanked by porticoes, both hall and porticoes being vaulted with burnt bricks set in mortar.

On the inner side of each paved square rose the gate-house of the main wall, surmounted by a great dome or cupola with a portico before the gateway. Within, the portico was occupied by the horse-guards and foot-guards of the Caliph.

Between the main and the inner walls the area of the four quadrants, divided off by the thoroughfares from the gates, was, in earlier times, built over by the houses of the immediate followers of the Caliph Mansur, to whom had been granted here plots of land, and before long the whole space had come to be covered by a network of roads and lanes. But the Caliph did not allow his people to build their houses close up against either the main wall or the wall of the central area; for, immediately within the main wall, an open ring, 12½ yards broad, was kept clear as a roadway; while, outside the wall of the central area, there was also a clear space forming a road. The houses in the streets and lanes of each quadrant could also, at need, be shut off from these roads by

strong gates.

In the centre of the city was a great circular area, at first only partially occupied by palaces and the mosque, but which in time came to be built over like the rest of Baghdad, and this area, which measured about 2,000 yeads (over a mile) across, was enclosed by the innermost circular wall with its four gateways. In the centre of this area stood the palace of the Caliph (called the Golden Gate), and beside it the Great Mosque ; while, from the four gates of the inner wall round the central area, the four high roads led out, radiating like the spokes of a wheel, each in turn passing through the gateways in the double walls, and finally crossing the ditch. This system of concentric circular walls, with a central palace, was an innovation in the plan of a Muslim city, first introduced by Mansur, who declared that the sovereign should live in the centre of all and equidistant from all.

Of this Round City, apparently, no traces now exist ; but the reason is not far to seek, when it is remembered that the country where Baghdad stands is entirely wanting in stone quarries, and the walls and houses were for the most part constructed of those sun-dried mud bricks which, with the lapse of centuries, are inevitably converted back into the clay whence they were originally moulded. The entire plan of the new capital speaks for the fixed determination of the Abbasides to rule with a firm hand ; and, for a century and a half, they carried out this determination with marked success. The Arab rule—under Persian influence—of which the new capital was the product and the proof—became an old oriental despotism. For want of space we must confine ourselves to a cursory view of the inner condition and the actual achievements of this dynasty.

The main support and strength of the Abbasides was the army, which had grown enormously by the admission of the new converts into its ranks. Under the first Abbasides it counted by hundreds of thousands. In Iraq alone it reckoned

125,000. This was regularly-paid soldiery. In proportion to their increase in numbers their pay declined. At the meridian of the Abbaside power in Baghdad the soldier received only 20 'dirhams' a month per head (a 'dirham' was about a 'franc' in value). Along with the regularly-paid soldiers there was a body of volunteers—consisting of Beduins, peasants and townsfolk—who, from motives religious or private, took part in the wars. Within the army the arrangement was according to nationality: the "Harabiyya"—infantry, armed with lances—consisted of Arabs; the "Jund"—infantry and cavalry—was composed chiefly of foreigners. Among the latter the Khorasanians were most prominent. This position was deliberately assigned to them for a purpose. The Caliphs believed that, by playing off the South and the North Arabian tribes against one another, they would control both. But scarcely a century had passed, when, along with the Khorasanians, another foreign element obtained a footing and secured an influence—more perilous by far than that of the Khorasanians. This was the fourth division of the army—the Turkish division. Year by year Turkish slaves came in larger and yet larger numbers to the markets of Baghdad, and through the markets made their way to the Caliph's court, and eventually to the Caliph's army. To them special consideration was shown, in the hope that they would constitute the strongest bulwark of the Caliphate. They thus became the bodyguards of the Caliphs and soon a scourge to the town, where arbitrariness and violence characterised their conduct. In course of time they got the Caliphs completely into their power—indeed they set them up and deposed them at will.

Despite this—for a whole century—the army of the Abbasides remained, in outer seeming, a tremendous instrument of power. In outfit and armour it was indistinguishable from the Greek army. It used almost the same weapons: bow and arrow, lance and javeline, sword and battle-axe. A

helmet protected the head, a coat-of-mail the body, and the arms and legs were encased in iron. The Saracens used girdles, reins, and swords adorned with silver. Saddles were of the same kind as those of the Byzantines, and precisely like those in fashion in the East.*

Reviews early formed part of the military exercise under Mansur, who seems to have interested himself very much in military affairs, and who used to hold these functions seated, on such occasions, on his throne, dressed in helmet and coat-of-mail. The troops were arranged before him in three divisions: the North Arabian (Mudar), the South Arabian (Yemenides) and the Khorasanides.† Under Mutasim a uniform was found for the troops. He dressed his bodyguard in damask with gold girdles. Mutawakkil ordered all the mercenary troops to change their old uniform, and to wear henceforth short brown cloaks, and to carry the sword, not according to the old Arabian custom, with a shoulder belt, but in imitation of the Persian fashion, buckled round the waist.‡

And, just as in our own times so in the days of Harun-ar-Rashid, science was pressed into the service of warfare. To each corps of archers was attached a body of Naphtha-firemen, who shot at the stronghold of the army with Naphtha or Greek fire. From the account handed down, it is clear that these Naphtha-firemen wore fire-proof suits, and could penetrate into the burning ruins of the enemy's stronghold. Whichever side we turn to, we come across practices which we fondly believe to be the acquisition and achievement of modern times. The spy system was specially developed. Both sexes served as spies, and travelled to neighbouring countries—in various disguises—notably as merchants and physicians—to collect and transmit information. Nowhere was the Arab espionage more active or more widely diffused than in the Byzantine Empire, for the

* Khuda Bakhsh, *Orient under the Caliphs*, p. 328.

† Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, I, p. 88.

‡ Khuda Bakhsh, *Orient under the Caliphs*, pp. 340, 344 and 345.

latter was still their honourable competitor, as it had been, in the past, their undoubted preceptor in the art of warfare. To guard against Byzantine encroachments, frontier fortifications came into existence—a form of military art testifying to the energy, method and practical instincts of the Arabs. The Syrian frontier, facing Asia Minor, had, for long, been a source of danger to the Arabs. Long, with alternating fortune, had the two rivals fought for the important strategic points there: Tarsus, Adana, Massysa, Marash, and Malatiyya.* Now they were captured by the Byzantines—now by the Arabs. Under Mansur they were retaken by the Arabs, and were strengthened and fortified anew. Under Harun-ar-Rashid a frontier province—with a purely military organization—was created; numerous blockhouses were built, and every important point was provided with its own permanent garrison. Over and above their pay and allowance, by no means small, the troops were given lands which they cultivated with their families. Under Harun and his immediate successors, entire peoples from the outlying provinces of the Empire, were transplanted and resettled, with the result that this part of the country—devastated and depopulated by unceasing wars—blossomed into life and activity. Until the time of the Caliph Wathiq, happy and prosperous were the conditions of the frontier province, but, then, its star began to wane. Fresh wars, and their distressing consequences, acted as a blight upon it.

The navy furnishes another striking feature of Muslim activities.† As early as 34 A.H., we hear of the conquest of Cyprus and the expedition to Byzantium. Since then expeditions suggestive of a navy are repeatedly mentioned. That here, in this sphere of activity, the Arabs were deeply beholden to the Byzantines, is a proposition beyond cavil or doubt. But if this is so, no less clear and undeniable is the debt which Europe owes to the Arabs in this very sphere of

* Khuda Bakhsh, *Orient under the Caliphs*, p. 347 *et seq*

† *Ibid*, p. 356 *et seq.*

activity. Witness the numerous nautical expressions which the West has accepted from the Arabs and which, indeed, the West has retained to the present day. Overwhelming was the Arab influence on the people living on the Mediterranean coast. "That the Arabian fleet of the earliest period," says Von Kremer, "was a model in many ways to those of the Christian countries, is patent from the fact that many Arab nautical terms have been preserved in the languages of Southern Europe, such as cable, Arabic *Hable*, Arsenal, Italian Darsonal (Arabic *Dar-ul-Sanah*); Corvette, which comes from the Arabic *Ghurab*, *i.e.*, Raven."

In military and civil administration the Caliphate attained its fullest development under the first Abbasides. The old division of the Empire into provinces under governors remained unchanged, but the danger of the governors becoming independent of the Central Government was realized and guarded against, by making the connection between the provinces and the Central authority more real and intimate. The roads that lay from Baghdad to the different parts of the Empire were scenes of lively intercourse. At Baghdad was a great Postal-Divan (a sort of Government Postal-Bureau), for which relays were provided all along the route. Pigeons, as carriers of letters, were used even under the Caliph Mutasim (835-842), and itineraries of the whole Empire at once assisted travellers in their tours and laid the foundation of geographical research and activity. But the postal system was not really meant for the public. It was intended for the benefit of the Government, and, as such, was a mere department of the State. The postmaster was the appointed supervisor of the officers in the provinces.* "At the headquarters of each of the large provinces," says Von Kremer, "was a postmaster, whose duty was to keep the Caliph continually informed of all important affairs. The postmaster had been to supervise the action of the Governor, and was, so to speak, a direct confidential agent appointed by the Central Government."

*Khuda Bakhsh, *Orient under the Caliphs*, p. 233 *et seq.*

Despite all efforts, decentralization could not be avoided. The governors became more and more independent, and their offices hereditary. They claimed and secured the right of appointing their lieutenant-governors, and soon became rulers of their 'quondam' provinces. Even at the capital itself the reins of Government soon slipped out of the hands of the rulers. By their side, we notice the *Wazir* as their counsellor and support. The office of the *Wazir*—though varying in importance under different Caliphs—was, indeed, powerful enough to convey the impression to the public that the real wielder of power was this officer and not the Caliph, however much in theory the former might have been responsible to the crown. Theoretically it was with the sanction of the Caliph that the *Wazir* appointed judges, from whom a thorough knowledge of law was expected. In matters affecting administration and justice the *Nazar-ul-Mazalim* or "Board for the Inspection of Grievances" constituted the Supreme Court. This institution was borrowed by the Norman King Roger of Sicily from the Arabs.*

Finances formed the main concern of the Government, and the clearest proof of this is to be found in the detailed reports of the state revenues that have come down to us. These reports testify to a brilliant prosperity during the first century of the Abbaside rule, and a steady decrease of revenue in each succeeding one. The splendour of the capital kept pace with the prosperity of the Empire. Within a short time, from a fortress it grew into a world-city of fabulous wealth of glory—standing aloft as the only rival of Byzantium.

In the first century of its existence Baghdad attained the meridian of its splendour—to be absolutely precise, in the first eighty-three years. Even under its founders, the new capital began to extend beyond the limits originally fixed. Along the high roads which led from the four gates into the provinces,

*For the history of this institution see Khuda Bakhsh, *Orient under the Caliphs*, pp. 287-92.

suburbs grew which, together with newly-arisen Rusafah—a part of the city on the eastern bank of the Tigris—covered five English square miles. Out of this sea of houses rose resplendent the palace of the Green Dome.* Up to the death of Amin (A.D. 813) this palace—regarding which our information is scanty—remained the official residence of the Caliph. Its inner arrangement and its external form were in Persian style ; nevertheless, it could not long satisfy the ever-augmenting æsthetic tastes of the Caliphs. Even Mansur erected a second palace, called Khuld, outside the city limits on the right bank of the Tigris ; and later a third one—Rusafah, on the left bank. While the last two received the attention, and drew heavily on the purses, of succeeding Caliphs, the Green Dome was left utterly neglected and forlorn, with the result that in March 941 the cupola, unable to resist a winter gale and a heavy shower, tottered and fell. A longer lease of life was the lot of the mosque which was contemporaneously built with this old palace in the central area of the town of Mansur.† Of this we possess more detailed information, which shows that inconspicuous still were the artistic achievements of the first Abbasides—though they impressed foreign talent for, and employed foreign labour upon, them. We know that the chief mosque was built of sun-dried bricks, set in clay, with a roof supported on wooden columns. Most of these columns were constructed of two or more beams or baulks of timber, joined together endwise with glue, and clamped with iron bolts.

This was the first mosque built in Baghdad, and, as originally constructed by Mansur, it stood for about half a century, when it was pulled down by Harun, who replaced its somewhat primitive structure by an edifice solidly built of kilnburnt-bricks set in mortar. But even of this no trace is left today. In the west of the Islamic Empire however—in Kairwan and Cordova—the mosques give us some idea of what

*Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad under the Caliphate*, p. 31.
†*Ibid.* pp. 33-34.

the chief mosque of Baghdad was like. Sacred or profane, the buildings of the city of Mansur shared the same fate. The desire always to create something new and better, already induced Mansur to lay the foundations of a palace and a mosque on the left bank of the Tigris. There, as Crown-Prince, his son Mehdi resided, and to its neighbourhood his popularity attracted all who had the means and influence to settle down there. Thus East Baghdad—mounting to power and fame—eclipsed and overshadowed the old city. Here lived the rich and proud Barmacides, occupying a beautiful pleasure-house which, after their fall, passed into the hands of the Caliphs.* This palace of Jafar, the Barmacide, which became the nucleus of the great congeries of palaces that subsequently were known as the "Dar-al-Khilafat," was at first called the "Kasr-Jafari," but afterwards, having come to be inhabited by Mamun, and by the Wazir, Hasan ibn Sahl, it was more generally named the "Kasr-Mamuni," or the "Kasr-Hasani." In its grounds, after the return of the Caliphate from Samarra, the great mosque of the palace ("Jami-al-Kasr") was erected, while, adjacent to the Hasani, were built two other palaces, namely the "Firdus," upstream, and the "Taj," downstream; all three buildings thus standing on the Tigris bank, with great gardens stretching behind them, enclosing many minor palaces within their precincts.

The temporary transfer of the capital—in the ninth century A.D.—from Baghdad to Samarra, did not seriously affect Baghdad. On the return of the Caliph to the old capital—notably in the eastern portion of the town—fresh developments took place. Almost nothing remains here of the artistic creations of Islam during five centuries. We are thus thrown upon our imagination to conceive the splendour of this 'quondam' world-city. We should not lose sight of the fact that Baghdad was also a port. In the quays of the Tigris—

*Guy Le Strange, *Baghdad under the Caliphate*, p. 243.

extending for miles on both banks—lay a fleet at anchor, river-boats of all forms and sizes, warships, and jolly-boats of the Caliphs and her wealthy citizens.

We would have relegated to the realm of fiction all that the Arab historians and poets relate of this wonderful city—of the five boats of Caliph Amin, built to look like a lion, an elephant, an eagle, a horse and a snake—had not recent researches ratified the statements otherwise seemingly incredible. It is reported that in East Baghdad there was an entire bazaar of Chinese wares procurable there, including also sable, ermine, marten, fur, fish-bones, leather, wax, arrows, arms and slaves from the north of Europe. Tens of thousands of Arab coins found in different parts of Russia, nay, even on the Swedish coast, confirm this report. There is thus little reason to doubt that the Arabs exported to those countries woven materials, jewellery, metal mirrors, glass beads, spices and harpoons for whaling. A glance at the exports and imports reveals the cultural superiority of the Islamic Empire. It exchanged its own products for the raw materials of the north. Sugar and the metal industry seem to have been and remained the domain of the Persians. On the other hand, Syria was the home of glass manufacture. Apart from the art of carpet-making, textiles were an old Arab industry which throve under the new conditions, and attained great excellence. Far-famed, indeed, was the Syrian glass, but Baghdad did not long lag behind, and established her own glass factory. In fact, she quickly learnt to use glass as an object of luxury. As early as the second century of the Hegira, the manufacture of enamelled and drawn glass was known to the Baghdadis.* In Iraq (Babylonia) the manufacture of glass hanging lamps for the mosque, and also cups of all sizes and colours, was a speciality. Until later times South Arabia supplied the finest brocade, woven linen, and silk materials. Damask, already much in

*Probably glass tubing or articles of glass made by manufacturing molten glass.

favour with the Omayyad Caliphs, became locally renowned in the Syrian capital. In the heyday of Baghdad the goldsmith's talents were much indented upon. We read of a golden tree which stood in one of the show-rooms of the Caliphs, and a golden elephant with ruby eyes. We also read of artistic timepieces ingeniously made about this time. When Maqrizi, an Egyptian, speaks of a school of painting at Basra, and of the works of a master there, in the noticeable absence of Arab painting, we are inclined to be rather sceptical about it. But, even here, recent discoveries silence our doubts, and correct our error. The little castle " Kusair Amra," discovered in the heart of the Syrian desert by the explorer Alois Musil (and more thoroughly examined since), is richly covered in the interior with wall-paintings in Byzantine style, and shows that, even in Omayyad times, they did not refrain from painting human figures on buildings, not held sacred. Thus falls to the ground the widely-accepted view that the Islamic prohibition of images had cut the life-nerve of the fine arts—sculpture and painting. In the mosque indeed—for fear of idolatry—human figures were not allowed to be painted. But " Kusair Amra " is an instance in point, showing liberal and free use of painting in buildings neither sacred nor religious. By inculcating the utility and excellence of handicrafts, Islam cast a religious halo over trade and craft, with the result that, wherever Muslims found anything new, they at once applied themselves to it, extending and developing it. For example, they chanced to hear of the art of manufacturing paper carried on in some remote corner of the Muslim Empire—possibly in China itself. It caught their fancy, and we notice that in the first years of the Abbaside rule a paper factory—possibly run by the Chinese —was established at Samarqand. Scarcely had they learnt to make paper, when they began to experiment in its production from linen and rags. In the year 794-95 the first paper factory was started in Baghdad, and the use of paper was introduced into Government offices. Gradually, throughout the Empire,

paper factories were set up, and paper of newer and newer kinds produced: silk-paper, note-paper, strong and weak paper; smooth and ribbed paper, white and coloured paper. Papyrus and parchment having played their role, a much cheaper writing material was found—a happy augury for the arts, the sciences, and letters.*

Another branch of industry was the preparation of perfumes from roses, water-lilies, stocks, orange-blossoms, musk flowers, etc. On this trade—as it existed in the neighbourhood of Damascus—we have detailed information from Al-Dimishqi. Very widely diffused, also, was this industry in the environs of Shiraz—so very widely diffused that the Government levied taxes upon buildings where rose-water was manufactured. The preparation of these perfumes required a number of chemicals. For agricultural, industrial and scientific purposes new instruments and implements were constantly needed, and these were always invented and supplied. In fact, to that industry the entire Islamic world devoted itself, and not without a tinge of pride do Arab authors enumerate its details, and dwell upon the devices hit upon for irrigation purposes.

Nor was food adulteration unknown or infrequent. Directions, given to the police for detection of such practices, have come down to us. A whole literature grew up, dealing with poisons, spices, steel-industry, porcelain, metal, weaving, etc. This literature was chiefly the work of artisans and traders, and not of the members of learned professions; but, to be sure, of artisans and traders of a superior kind, and was designed for the working classes. Thus trade and craft, power and wealth, all helped, in equal measure, to deepen and popularise culture. With prosperity came the need for enjoyment, and the love of beauty; and, noblest and highest of all, the craving for knowledge, the search after truth.† No-

* Khuda Bakhsh, *Book-Trade under the Caliphate.* (*Calcutta Review*, February, 1924.)

† Dierds, *Araber im Mittelalter*, p. 111.

thing brings this fact more obviously home than the educational institutions in the golden age of Baghdad. Already, under the first Caliphs, we see, in Arabia and the conquered provinces, schools established for the teaching of the Qur'an.* Under the Abbasides we find these schools spread like a network throughout the Caliphate. As even today in the East, the instruction imparted was, as a rule, mainly confined to the Qur'an. Grammar was not infrequently added, but the art of calligraphy was never excluded from the curriculum. Without any initiative on the part of the State a sort of compulsory school system grew up. Boys joined schools from the sixth year, and girls were not absent from them either. Rich and poor alike enjoyed the same rights and privileges. The community paid the school-master, and we read with amusement how parents arranged with the master to get their children away from the school earlier than others. The subsequent foundation of the universities shows how considerable were the results of these elementary institutions. True, however, middle schools—a preparatory stage to the admission into the universities—were lacking. Even at the universities religion retained its primacy, for was it not religion which first opened the path to learning? The Qur'an, tradition, jurisprudence, therefore—all these preserved their pre-eminence there. But it is to the credit of Islam that it neither slighted nor ignored other branches of learning; nay, it offered the very same home to them as it did to theology—a place in the mosque. Until the fifth century of the Hegira "the mosque was the university of Islam," and to this fact is due the most characteristic feature of Islamic culture—"perfect freedom to teach." The teacher had to pass no examination, required no diploma, no formality, to launch out in that capacity. What he needed was competence, efficiency, mastery of his

* Khuda Bakhsh, *Marriage and Family Life among the Arabs*. (*Calcutta Review*, August 1923, p. 195 *et seq.*) *Cf.* Snouck Hurgronje's *Achehnese*, Vol. II, pp. 1-10.

subject. The public character of the teaching ensured the competence of the teacher. Every Muslim had free admission to the lectures. And to these lectures came not inquisitive ignoramuses, but Muslim " savants " from all parts of the Empire. It was open to any member of the audience to question the lecturer, and a lecturer, unable to explain a point raised, or to satisfy the questioner, was forthwith disgraced, discredited. Many features of the teaching profession have come down to us. Every teacher had his fixed days and hours. On the other hand, there was no time-limit to the lectures. It rested entirely with the lecturer to fix the number of lectures on any given subject. There were no fixed holidays when all classes closed down. The lecture was usually based on a treatise composed either by the lecturer himself or by another. The lecture, delivered slowly, was taken down by the audience. By means of questions occasionally thrown out, the lecturer ascertained whether he was being followed or not. At times he stepped down among the audience, to discuss the subject with them. From the tenth century on, the older teachers employed assistant teachers to help the students in revising the subject. Until the eleventh century the teacher was left to earn his own living. Some held appointments as judges (*qadhis*), others enjoyed patronage. Others again carried on some trade or craft. Students of languages and literature took up private tutorships, worked as companions, or composed occasional odes, for their living. Later on, academies were established by princes, where the teachers received salaries and enjoyed honour and dignity.* But the era of decline had then already begun. The period of Islam's widest sway corresponded with the period of the most perfect freedom to teach. There was one and only one check—copyright. No one was allowed to use the book of another at a public lecture without written permission.

* Khuda Bakhsh, *Islamic Civilization*, p. 285 *et seq.*; Wustenfeld, *Die Academien der Araber* (Gottingen, 1837).

Even after the death of the author, the right to record this permission devolved on his heirs. Nor was any member of the audience allowed to make use of a lecture without the lecturer's permission. This permission was the sign-manual warrant of competence. The maintenance and enforcement of the law of copyright served as an incentive to personal effort, to originality, to progress, in the domain of learning.

In dealing with the development of Science in Islam we cannot overlook the "role" sustained by the various nations within its fold. We must confess that the refinement of poetry, the wealth of light literature, the best portion of philosophy and historiography, are the intellectual gifts of the Persians. Nor can we shut our eyes to the fact that theology, jurisprudence, medicine and the natural sciences, rest to such an extent upon a Hellenistic basis that they may almost be regarded as identical with it. All this notwithstanding, we must guard against undervaluing the subtle influence of Arab psychology upon Islamic culture, difficult though it be to establish it by positive proof or conclusive documentation.* After long overestimating the Arab influence, we would fall into the opposite error† were we to assume that Islamic "savants"—belonging, though they did to different nationalities; possessing perfect command over the Arabic language; living, as they did, in closest contact with the Arabs; making Arab history, poetry, religious ideas, subjects of deep, penetrating study—were not leavened by Arab thought, or that the uniform character of their intellectual out-turn was not born of Arab influence. Nor should it be forgotten that it was the Arabs who stirred afresh in these various nationalities a craving for knowledge and offered opportunities for the satisfaction of that renewed craving to them. Nor yet should it be forgotten that it was an

*Dierds, p. 114 *et seq.*

†I would recommend for study Renan's paper on *Islam* and Emanuel Deutsch's *Islam* in his *Literary Remains.* The extravagances of one are corrected by the sober reflections of the other.

Arab dynasty which, officially and privately, stood out for culture and enlightenment ; tending, nursing, patronizing, learning and thought generally.

When we consider Muslim learning, we must not lose sight of the fact that what we are contemplating covers some 500 years. During so long a period there was naturally ebb and flow in culture—such ebb and flow as we find in the history of every civilization. For about two centuries Arab learning remained at its zenith. In the course of the third century we observe traces of decay in politics and in letters—the symptoms, in the domain of letters, manifesting themselves, in the appearance of mere commentaries and compilations in lieu of original works. More and more do these compilations and commentaries multiply as the years go by.

The intellectual activities of the Arabs group themselves into two main divisions : activities evoked by the predilections of the Arab nation ; *e.g.*, theology, jurisprudence, philology and history, and activities evoked by an instinctive human desire for knowledge ; *e.g.*, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, medicine, natural sciences, geography. That the Arabs, at first, directed their attention to those branches of learning to which they were drawn from motives of religion, and in which they attained a distinctive greatness, is a proof of their talents. Thus the necessity of settling and explaining the Qur'anic texts became the basis of theology.

The principle, rigidly adhered to in the beginning, of the oral transmission of the Qur'an was ultimately given up. The traditional reading was adopted, set down in writing, and amply commented upon. More important still was the theological speculation which contact with Christianity had provoked in the first century of Islam at Damascus. To these theological speculations we must ascribe the origin of the " Murji'ites," * who held that even heretical views—provided

*Khuda Bakhsh, *Islamic Civilization*, p. 59 *et seq.*

belief in Allah and His Prophet remained unimpaired—did not amount to an abandonment of Islam. In Basra arose the Mutazalites, who busied themselves with questions regarding the essence and attributes of God, and who, rejecting the doctrine of predestination, proclaimed the free-will of man. Under the Abbasides even the eternal character of the Qur'an was called into question—a doctrine which received the Caliph Mamun's assent in his edict of A.D. 827. By this edict the Qur'an was declared to be "created and not eternal." Through Al-Ashari (A.H. 300)—who passed over from "Mutazalaism" into orthodoxy—dialectics made its entry into Islam. Henceforth dogmatic teachings were founded on scholastic philosophy. In contrast to the hair-splitting speculations and unbending legal views of the ninth century A.D., the Sufis step forward into light. Ascetics originally—saturated with Neo-Platonic and Buddhistic ideas—the Sufis developed a system of exaltation as the final goal of religious life. While some taught the various ways of contemplation leading up to merger in God, others sang, in rapturous strain, of divine love and divine ecstasy. In Al-Kushari (d. 1074) and Al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) systematic Sufi'ism—in Ibn-al-Farid (d. 1234), and Ibn-al-Arabi (d. 1240), Arab mystic poetry found brilliant representatives.

We have already seen that under the Omayyads jurisprudence branched off from theology in the form of "hadith," *i.e.*, collections of traditions. Originally traditions were transmitted orally, but, in the second century of the Hegira, the huge collections of traditions were found to be in a hopelessly chaotic condition, and an attempt was made to arrange them under the names of their respective narrators and finally in chapters, according as they related to matters concerning jurisprudence or private life. The collection of Bukhari (d. 872), and that of Muslim, are the oldest in point of time. Along with four others they have enjoyed, and still enjoy, an undisputed supremacy in the entire Islamic world.* These

* Morley, *Analytical Digest*, Vol. I, p. cclii *et seq.*

"hadith" in conjunction with the Qur'an, constitute the fundamental source of Islamic law. But, with the process of the sun, conditions of life shaped themselves in such a variety of ways, that the available traditions could not meet or solve the new problems raised by altering circumstances, chiefly in the less conservative parts of the Empire—*e.g.*, in active, surging Iraq. Thus, to the Qur'an and the "Sunna" was now added a new juristic element—speculation. Since the beginning of the Abbaside rule the cultivation and development of jurisprudence became keener and more marked than ever before, as, henceforth, the idea of a State church, according to the Persian model, asserted itself and rose triumphant. "Government and religion are twin-born" became the pervading, permeating view. Under its influence Islamic doctrines henceforth assumed their own special casuistic stamp. Knowledge of law became the most important branch of theology, and henceforward the theologian was called a jurist (*faquih)* or a "savant" (*álim*).

Through conquests Muslims had become acquainted with the laws of Justinian, and as the "hadith" were not at all sufficient to furnish a guiding principle, in dealing with the abundance of cases that now called for decision, the Muslims early adopted the methods of the Roman jurists—analogical deduction (*Qiyas*) and private judgment (*rai*)—for adapting and extending the law to suit the times. This led to a violent conflict between the supporters of "hadith" pure and simple, and the champions of a progressive system of law, with the result that schools of jurisprudence came into being which, in the evolution of principles, distinctly stepped beyond the "hadith", but which yet, in outer seeming, based their decisions, in individual cases, on the materials subsisting in the "hadith." This was naught but our old friend "legal fiction." What wonderful disguises it has assumed in different systems! Not the first, but by far the most powerful jurist that addressed

himself to *Qiyas*, was Abu Hanifa.* Although not a judge himself, he founded a school of law which, according to Von Kremer, is the highest and loftiest achievement of which Islam is capable. Shortly after his death, his system was officially accepted at court and throughout the Islamic Empire, and to this system most Muslims still yield assent and pay homage. While Abu Hanifa struck the path of juristic speculation,† Malik Ibn Anas adopted the historical stand-point. He composed a *Corpus Juris* on the basis of the legal practice current under the first Caliphs. A third one—Shafa'i—moderated the use of speculation by establishing the "fundaments of law" and a methodical system. His system rapidly spread in Syria, Egypt and Iraq, where it dominates to this day. It even made its way to India, and in Java it subsists in full vigour. The last of the line of jurists was Ahmad Ibn Hambal, who represented the uncompromising attitude of the champions of "hadith." It steadily lost ground, and is today mainly confined to the interior of Arabia—chiefly among the Wahabis. These are the four schools which represent the highest achievement of Islam in the sphere of law.

An account of the development of Muslim theology and jurisprudence—brief though it be—was necessary; for, even to-day, Islam leans upon the creations of those times.

*Goldziher, *Die Zahiriten*, p. 13; Khuda Bakhsh, *Orient under the Caliphs*, p. 394 *et seq.*; Morley, *Analytical Digest*, p. cclxii.

†Speaking of the exercise of *Qiyas* as allowed by the chief Sunni sects, Ibn Khaldun says, ' the Science of Jurisprudence forms two systems, that of the followers of private judgment and analogy (*ahl-al-rai, wa ahl-al-qiyas)* who were natives of Iraq, and that of the followers of tradition, who were natives of Hijaz. As the people of Iraq possessed but few traditions, they had recourse to analogical deductions, and attained great proficiency therein, for which reason they were called *the followers of private judgment*: the Imam Abu Hanifa, who was their chief, and had acquired a perfect knowledge of this system, taught it to his disciples. The people of Hijaz had Imam Malik Ibn Anas, and then Al-Shafa'i. Some learned circles disapproved of analogical deductions, and rejected that mode of proceeding. These were the *Zahirites* (followers of Abu Daud Sulaiman), and they laid it down as a principle that all points of law should be taken from the *Nusus* (text of the Qur'an and tradition), and the Ijma (universal accord of the ancient Imams)—Apud De Slane's *Ibn Khallikan*, Vol. I, p. xxvi, note.

Of historical studies—the beginnings of which we have already noticed under the Omayyads—nothing need be said here, save that they found greater and greater favour among Muslims. At first it was the Prophet and Arabian antiquity that engaged attention and absorbed activity, but later the learned took to writing annals. No one not acquainted with Arab historical works can form any idea of the immense industry which they involve. To the loftier conception of history, however, they never attained—with one single exception, namely, Ibn Khaldun (d. 1401), who, in his celebrated *Muqaddama*, developed views savouring of modern times. All that Ibn Khaldun has said about the influence of food and climate, says Von Kremer, has been worked out, from the modern point of view, by Buckle in his *History of Civilization*. What the Arab thinker divined, the British publicist has proved. Between them, however, there is a gap of five hundred years! One wrote in the metropolis of the modern world, on the Thames; the other in North Africa, in an old castle (Kalat Ibn Salmah) the ruins of which are still to be seen in the province of Oren (Algeria) on the left bank of Mina.* More difficult it is for a layman to form an idea of Arab philology, rich exceedingly though is the literature on the subject. If hazy and indistinct are its beginnings, even to an expert, how much more difficult must it be for an outsider to realize the immense intellectual labour needed to produce a grammar of the Arabic language such as the Persian Sibwaih's? This classic, completed in the second century of the Hegira, and known henceforth throughout the Islamic Empire as *The Book*, shows at once the philological attainments of the learned, and the discriminating interest of the populace in this branch of learning. If philology owes its birth to the Qur'an—that is to

* Khuda Bakhsh, *Politics in Islam*, p. 178 (in the Sir Asutosh Mookerjee Silver Jubilee Volume); Von Kremer, *Ibn Khaldun und seine Culturgeschichte der islamischen Reiche.*

say, to a need at once national and religious—it did not altogether ignore the general human interest therein. Arab activity and achievement, in this direction, at once come to mind when we think of Arab culture. Here the Arabs—we use the term in its widest sense—played a world-role. They took what they found, built upon it, and handed down the result of their labours as a stepping-stone for further progress.

It is not to be expected that within two centuries of their intellectual growth the Arabs unaided, wholly of their own initiative, would inaugurate all the various branches of learning. Intellectual activities of different nations are connected with one another—nay, are even dependent upon one another—whatever be the interval of time separating them. The spark of truth, once alight, is never wholly quenched. The advancement of knowledge, therefore, is never isolated, never apart from other movements, whether contemporaneous or of the ages past. There is a continuity in human progress. Unfair, therefore, is it to condemn medieval Islamic civilization for having used, amplified, enriched the intellectual legacies of the earlier ages.

The most precious treasure, at hand, at the time of the growth of Arabism, was the intellectual legacy of Greece.

It is at least something—something to their credit—that, in an age when the Arabs were masters of a goodly portion of the civilized world, within the limits of their sway they encouraged and patronized learning and literature in others—their subjects for the time being. Thus, in their day, it was the Arabs who kept the torch of culture burning. They contributed what they could to the task, the glory, of preserving the Past for the Present and the Future. For this, at least, we are in their debt. Had they chosen, things might have been so appallingly different !

Under Greek and Roman domination Greek culture, interwoven with Christianity, was transplanted to Syria and Mesopotamia. Though not assessed at its true value by the

Syrians, this culture was yet taken care of by them. In the cloisters of Syria they translated not only ecclesiastical, but also almost all the profane, writers then in vogue, devoting special attention to Aristotle, Hippocrates and Galen. The Nestorians—oppressed and persecuted in the Byzantine Empire—found an asylum for themselves and their learning among the Persians. In the tranquillity of their adopted homes they resumed their studies, and became special purveyors of Greek culture to the world at large. About A.D. 550 the Persian King, Khusru Nushirwan, founded an academy—in the west of Persia, at Jundashapur—for the study of medicine and philosophy. This academy—an offshoot of Greek culture—continued to shed light and learning up to the time of the Abbasides. Along with the Syrian cloisters and the academy at Jundashapur, Hellenistic learning found a third home in the Mesopotamian town of Harran, whose inhabitants—loyal to their heathen faith up to the fourth century of Islam—continued till then their mathematical and astronomical studies with uninterrupted and unimpaired zeal.*

From all these sources knowledge flowed to the Arabs. We cannot say precisely when Arab interest was awakened in the culture of the subject races—the Syrians, the Persians, the Indians. We notice, however, isolated efforts (notably in the occult sciences) even under the Omayyads. The most lively intellectual intercourse, of course, could only arise when the new religion became a binding link between ruler and ruled. This can hardly be dated earlier than the Abbaside ascendancy.

Under Caliph Mamun (813-833) translations began on a grand scale. Christians were sent to the Eastern Empire to find new books. Muslims, on their travels, searched for rare works, and the rich maintained a number of translators, and paid them handsomely. Many of the translators, about this time, were not intimate enough with Arabic to render Greek

*Khuda Bakhsh, *Islamic Civilization*, pp. 269-71.

into it. So they translated Greek into Syriac, and got others to turn their Syriac translation into Arabic. In these circumstances texts necessarily suffered, but the anxiety to secure correct versions led to repeated translations—each always an improvement upon the last.

Philosophical, mathematical, medical, studies were the flower and fruit of these activities. It was fortunate for the intellectual development of Islam that it took Aristotelean, and not Platonic, or its branch the Neo-Platonic, philosophy as the starting-point of its intellectual voyage of discovery. Aristotle thus became the supreme teacher of the Arabs. What he taught was accepted almost unchallenged. With some slight exceptions unquestioned was his lead, or rather dictatorship. All the writings of Aristotle, then known, were done into Arabic. It is not possible to enter here into the details of the translating activities under the Caliphate. Only a brief summary of the different branches of learning can be attempted. Taking over the elements of mathematics from Euclid, the decimal system from the Indians in the ninth century, they soon made substantial progress. The adoption of the sign "zero" (Arabic *sifr*) was a step of the highest importance, leading up to the so-called arithmetic of positions. With the help of the Arab system of numbers, elementary methods of calculation were perfected ; the doctrine of the properties of, and the relations between, the equal and the unequal and prime numbers, squares and cubes, was elaborated ; algebra was enriched by the solution of the third and fourth degrees, with the help of geometry, and so on. About the year A.D. 820 the mathematician Al-Khawarzimi wrote a text-book of algebra in examples, and this elementary treatise—translated into Latin—was used by Western scholars down to the sixteenth century.* How very congenial geometry was to the Arab intellect is evidenced, not only by the results of their scientific works, but

*Wustenfeld, *Ubersetzungen Arabischer Werke in Das Lateinische* (Gottingen, 1877).

also by the highly-appreciated geometrical surface-decorations of Arab art. In the domain of Trigonometry the theory of sine, cosine and tangent is an heirloom of the Arabs. The brilliant epochs of Peurbach, of Regiomontanus, of Copernicnicus, cannot be recalled without reminding us of the fundamental and preparatory labours of the Arab mathematicians. They loved to interlace their theories with practical examples, the result being that Geodesy, the calculation of the height of mountains, of the width of valleys or the distance between two objects situated on a plain surface, reached a high state of perfection, and was particularly of service in designing aqueducts, in applying the principles of mechanics to the construction of engines of war, and of highly sensitive balances. The determination of specific weight, learned from the Greeks, was rendered more expeditious by the introduction of new methods and improved manipulations. The compass, an invention of the Chinese, became the guide of the navigators whose destination was Ceylon, the Sunda Islands and China. From the Arabs, indeed, the Italian navigators obtained their knowledge of the use of the compass, without which the great sea-voyages of the fifteenth century would have been an impossibility.

That it was not merely practical interests which gave an impetus to the study of physical sciences is especially proved by the investigations that took place in the domain of optics. Through the study of the works of Euclid and Ptolemy, the Arabs adopted Plato's theory that vision was effected by antennae proceeding outwards from the eyes. But the majority of the Muslim scientists, adopting the views of Aristotle, taught that vision was the effect of light rays passing from the objects to the eyes. The doctrine of vision, that is to say, the question how objects appear to us in the most various circumstances, and where the image is formed, was one of intense, absorbing interest to Muslim savants. On the basis of conclusions drawn from Euclid and Ptolemy, the sense deceptions, caused by

refraction, etc., were more thoroughly investigated. To the solution of the same problem was devoted the theory of optics propounded by Ibn-al-Haitham (d. 1038), the Al-Hazam of the Middle Ages, a theory which held sway until recent times. In addition to these investigations Ibn-al-Haitham, using Greek models, engaged in researches on spherical and parabolic mirrors and devised a sound method of finding the focus. Roger Bacon (d. 1294) brought home to Western scholars the results of his labours. Wrongly to Roger Bacon was ascribed what, in truth, was the distinctive achievement of Ibn-al-Haitham. Other investigations of Ibn-al-Haitham concerned themselves with the *camera obscura*, which he was probably the first to make use of. To him, too, must be ascribed the discovery of the distinction between "umbra" and "penumbra." The treatise of Ibn-al-Haitham on optics was translated into Latin and Italian, and served Kepler as a reliable guide in his researches. Even Leonardo Da Vinci appears to have known and used Ibn-al-Haitham's works.

Next to mathematics, astronomy was the favourite study of the Arabs. Since time immemorial, stars had been their guides in the desert. Already the Babylonians had made a study of the heavens, and through the stars had sought to read the future. When, by translations of the writings of Ptolemy and *Siddhanta* (the latter an Indian work on astronomy) interest in this subject was revived, the Muslims made substantial progress therein.

At various centres of the Empire observatories were established under Mamun, and by exchanging observations Islam succeeded in revising the astronomical tables of Ptolemy, and in ascertaining, with greater precision, the obliquity of the ecliptic and the orbits of the sun, the moon, and the planets. In a most ingenious manner Al-Beruni determined the magnitude of the earth's circumference. All over the Empire, by the aid of astronomy and mathematics, Islam fixed the direction of prayer, in the mosques, towards Mekka.

They knew that the light of the moon was borrowed from the sun, but went astray on the position of the earth in the universe. Two of the oldest Muslim astronomers—Al-Farghani and Al-Battani (d. 929)—were the preceptors of Europe, and under the name of Alfraganus and Albatenius enjoyed high and widespread renown. The numerous astronomical terms of Arab origin (*e.g.*, *Zenith*, *Azimuth*, *Nadir*, etc.) testify to the indebtedness of the West to the Muslim astronomy of the Middle Ages. Inherited from an unascertainably remote antiquity, astrology, throughout the Middle Ages, went hand-in-hand with astronomy. Possibly astrology was a powerful incentive to the study of astronomy—certainly it was not an impediment to it. Enlightened spirits, like Avicenna, cutting themselves adrift from current superstitions, waged war against astrology as much as against alchemy. But to alchemy we cannot refuse the honour of having given an impetus to experiments that were helpful, nay enriching, to chemistry. The oldest chemists, as a body, were alchemists. This notwithstanding, in their writings we find items of chemical knowledge which cannot be shown to have existed anterior to their times. They describe the methods of melting and solution ; of filtering, crystallizing, sublimating. They knew alum, saltpetre, sal-ammoniac, alkali prepared from tartar and saltpetre ; and among them we first notice the knowledge of mineral acids. The increase in the number of artificially-prepared substances ; the perfection of methods handed down from the Greeks ; the application of these methods to most diverse materials, are the striking achievements of the Arabs in the domain of chemistry. If, in this direction, they advanced considerably beyond the Greeks, it was due to the fact that in the place of hazy, mystical speculations they introduced objective experiments into the study of nature. From attaining full measure of success in experimental work they were, indeed, checked in the field of medical science, which they cultivated with zeal, but in which they attained only moderate success. Anatomy was forbidden, and thus

Arab medical science never got beyond Galen. Different, no doubt, would it have been had no such prohibition be enlaid on anatomy. Nevertheless, in one branch of pathology they made considerable advance. They thoroughly mastered the anatomical structure of the eye.

They highly developed the art of nursing in public hospitals, and the observations made and the experiences acquired there were embodied in the admirable dietetics of Ibn Abbas Majusi. If the earlier physicians at the Court of Baghdad—Indians apart—were exclusively intent on translating the works of their forerunners into Arabic—particularly those of Dioscorides, Hippocrates, etc.—the later ones succeeded in displacing the works of Galen and Hippocrates for several centuries and substituting their own at the Universities. Of this class of original writers the oldest is Mohamed Ibn Zakariyyah-al-Razi (850-923) who, in ten volumes, set forth, under Mansur, an *Encyclopædia of Medicine.* As distinguished as Razi, but later in point of time, was Ibn Sina (Avicenna) author of a *Canon of Medicines.* Up to the sixteenth century the ninth volume of the works of Razi (*Lat.* Rases) and the *Canon of Avicenna* constituted the basis of the lectures on medicine in the Universities of Europe.

The successes of the Arabs were not uniform in all the sciences pursued by them. Least striking in Zoology—they achieved considerable distinction in Mineralogy and Botany. The latter they cultivated with increased and increasing interest—especially so, because of its importance to medical science. The result was a harvest of new discoveries. But they never really tried to build up a connected system of Natural Sciences out of the abundance of material at hand. However accurate in observation and industrious in their accumulation of facts, the final elaboration of a system was—as it is even today—the weakest point in the intellectual armoury of the Arabs. True, in the *Astronomical Tables* of Al-Beruni; in the *Scales of Wisdom* of Hazini; in the *Canon of*

Avicenna; in the *Thesaurus Opticæ* of Ibn-al-Haitham they have left behind comprehensive scientific treatises. But no such achievement stands to their credit in the realm of those philosophical speculations which they entered with such consuming zest. Nay, not only nothing enduring is to be discovered there, but they scarcely realized the value and worth of the legacy bequeathed to them. In analysis they shone. There, they were in their element.

Logic sharpened the weapons of polemical criticism. Natural sciences weakened the force of Qur'anic arguments. Reason began to extend her sway—to challenge faith. The newly-arisen freedom and flexibility of mind found expression and satisfaction in travels. It seemed as if the old Beduin roving instinct had laid hold of all who had accepted Islam. Religion primarily stimulated this passion for extensive travel; for did it not enjoin pilgrimages to the sanctuaries of Mekka and Jerusalem, and later even of Cordova? From the frontiers of India to those of Morocco, the Arabic language was understood, if not spoken. It reigned supreme in the mosques, not merely as the language of worship, but also as that of instruction. Thus—hail from where he might—the Muslim could attend every lecture; take part in every discussion held at the mosques. The peace and security enjoyed under a firm Government promoted these extensive travels. The theologian ransacked the whole Empire to obtain traditions from the descendants of the last Companions of the Prophet; amidst dangers and privations, among the Beduins of Central Arabia, the philologist sought the key to the language of the Qur'an and the most ancient poets; those interested in other branches of learning would not rest content until they had heard the lectures of the renowned professors of their particular subject—though they thought and lived at the opposite ends of the Empire.

In these circumstances it is not to be wondered at if geographical knowledge increased; exhaustive books of travels were written; valuable geographical works composed.

More fateful still for cultural purposes—though not altogether free from danger for the State—was the diffusion of fresh knowledge and the circulation of fresh ideas throughout the Empire. Thus we hear how the first messenger of unfettered views was hailed with joy and acclamation in Khorasan, and how a Mekkan, hearing at Baghdad that there they had done away with anthropomorphism—still rampant in Mekka—began, in his native town, an account of his travels with the words "I have discovered new Islam."

A new Islam! Among highly-cultured people—armed with mathematics, natural sciences, logic—the Qur'an could hardly maintain its unchallenged sway; and thus, despite all persecutions on the part of the State, the freest and boldest rationalism found and forced a way. And, with the passing years, more and ever more clearly was it realized that there was no necessity for only one single successor of the Prophet as Prince of the Faithful. Spain had long made itself independent—Africa, politically, pursued its own destiny. In *one* respect, and one *only* the unity of the Islamic Empire remained intact, unaffected—in the search for truth, in the pursuit of beauty. Politically, the Empire had fallen into pieces. This spelled no disaster—no loss to culture.

When, in A.D. 1258, the Moghals, under Halaku, broke for ever the power of the Abbassides, and destroyed, with ruthless vandalism, their capital—effacing therefrom all vestiges of science and art—in the North of Africa and in Arab Spain Muslim civilization, undisturbed, still continued its independent, pacific course, and preserved there for us—what we mourn as lost in the East—the memorials of Islamic Art.

CHAPTER VI

MUSLIM NORTH AFRICA AND SPAIN

The one condition precedent for Culture is a well-settled Government; for such a Government alone is at once the basis of social order, of trade and commerce, and, indeed, of all national prosperity, and well-being. The vaster the empire the greater the development under favourable conditions. For the culture not only of Islam but of Europe too, it was a good augury that the Arabs subdued the entrie northern coast of Africa and the south-western part of Europe. It was no light task for the Arabs to hold in check an immense territory inhabited by tenacious and warlike peoples. It took more than two decades completely to subjugate and pacify those parts of Egypt and Tripoli which yielded to the earliest assaults of Muslim arms. Even the romance-tinged advance of Uqba Ibn Nafi—the real conqueror of North Africa, and the founder of the military camp at Kairwan—was rendered futile by his death (A.H. 63). North Africa shook off the Muslim yoke. Kairwan itself fell into the hands of the Berbers, and the frontier of Islam was pushed back to Barka. Only the third attempt—undertaken six years later—successfully attained the goal. After heavy and, in the beginning, disastrous struggles with the Byzantines and the Berbers, the destruction of Carthage, and the annihilation of the Berber priestess Kahina and her followers, the country was conquered up to Constantine, and the Muslim frontier was extended, between the years 87-90 A.H. (706-709 A.D.), by Musa Ibn Nusair, as far as Tangier. Already in 710 A.D. had begun the advance towards Spain. The history of that invasion is well known: how a freedman of Musa, with but

500 men, undertook the first expedition to the southern promontory of the Iberian Peninsula; how, in the year 711, another freedman, Tarik, with 7,000 men, pure Berbers, crossed over in small boats; how Roderick's army of 90,000 strong was defeated, the same year, by 25,000 Muslims, and how Cordova and Toledo fell. Well known, too, is it, how Musa, jealous of the successes of his lieutenant Tarik, imprisoned him, and how, when strongly reinforced, he reduced all Spain to Muslim rule.

Musa, however, was suddenly recalled. When leaving Spain, he transferred to his sons authority over different provinces. But the Caliph, distrusting the whole family, declined to ratify his arrangements. Henceforth, in the western provinces, this tale constantly repeats itself: the Central Power's distrust of the local governor and the Local Government's attempt to make itself independent of the Caliph. Witness all Moorish history in Africa and Spain!

Though questioned, if not powerless, was the will of Baghdad in the Pyrenees, yet, even there, community of language and religion implanted an ineradicable sense of Muslim unity. More important by far than the unity of the Caliphate was this unity of language and religion. On the common interest in the Qur'an and the branches of learning connected therewith rested the whole foundation of intellectual activity in Spain and North Africa in those days. And to this unity of language must be ascribed the outstanding fact that, from Khorasan to Spain, the flower and fruit of Muslim learning was the common possession of the entire Islamic world. Wheresoever the cultured Muslim might travel, he only had to enter the mosque to feel perfectly at home.* Arabic was not only the language of worship. It was also the medium of instruction. Every book that was written in the East or the West was the common possession of all. Thus, the sword of Islam, in the first instance, and the Arab

*Von Kremer, *Culturgeschichte des Orients*, Vol. II, p. 439 *et seq.*

imperial instincts in the second, helped the sciences of the East in their trend westward. The learning of Greece and India passed across North Africa to Europe.

From the Arabic literature that has come down to us we see that in Egypt, in Tunis, in Morocco, everywhere, schools were founded and learned men encouraged. It was usual for authors to associate themselves with the places where they worked, and from the names of the authors we can thus make out the province or the town or the village—from extreme East to extreme West—where they lived and wrote. We must, however, restrict ourselves to Cordova—the rival of Baghdad.

Since the middle of May, 756, the Omayyads—excluded from the East—held sway here as the "Princes of Andalusia" and the "successors of the Caliphs." Their 280 years' rule constitute the flowering-time of Arab culture in Spain. With the wonderful economic growth of the country, thanks to an excellent system of irrigation and waterworks, enriched by the introduction of the agricultural products of the East, such as rice, sugar-cane, date-palms, peaches and pomegranates; with a thriving trade which Cordova carried on with the North African Coast, nay with the very interior of Africa as far as the Sudan; with its silk industry, which, at the time of its highest bloom, engaged 130,000 men to work it; poetry, arts, sciences, not only kept pace, but became the ruling passion of the Andalusians.

Sheer joy in the beauty of words and their collocation is one of the dominant characteristics of the Arabs. Verses—countless in number—flew from lip to lip, admired by high and low alike, not merely for their poetical contents but for their exquisite diction. At all times, and in all countries, wherever Arabic is spoken, intense, overpowering has been this passion for poetry. In Spain it reached its culminating point.* From king to peasant, all cultivated the art of

*Schack, *Poesie und Kunst der Araber*, p. 30 *et seq*. Dierds, *Araber im Mittelalter*, Chapters 7 and 8.

improvisation. To answer in an improvised verse of pleasing rhyme and poetic fancy was the most appreciated of intellectual accomplishments. Amazingly large was the circle of poets there. Almost every one of the Omayyad Caliphs wrote verse—the first of them, in fact, was a poet of rich endowments. A writer of the thirteenth century wrote a comprehensive work dealing only with the Arab kings and magnates who distinguished themselves in this way. High in favour at Court and with Muslim nobility, stood poets of note and distinction. A mere list of Spanish Arab poets would make a volume. Music and song struck and maintained their alliance with poetry. The musician at the court of Abdur Rahman III was a man of rare culture. Versed in astronomy and history, he drew princely pay and lived in princely splendour. That the most renowned musician of Cordova was at the same time historian and an astronomer, and could recount "glorious things of all countries," was no mere accident; for, with all its gaieties, Cordova was pre-eminently the centre of learning, and, as such, the Baghdad of the West. Countless were those who occupied themselves with theology and jurisprudence—the so-called *Faqih.** Already, under the third Caliph, they felt strong enough to rebel against him; and when, after a second insurrection, their quarter was destroyed, 60,000 inhabitants left Andalusia.

In Al-Kali and Al-Zubaidi philology, in Al-Razi and Ibn-ul-Qutiyya history, found their best representatives. But, in those branches of learning which were not concerned with theology, the western, for the time being, lagged behind the eastern portion of the Islamic Empire. Later, indeed, the translations from Greek and Indian languages exercised here their stimulating influence. Astronomy, then, in Al-Ghafiqi; natural sciences and mathematics in the versatile Majhariti, found their ablest exponents. Medicine made tremendous

* Dozy's *Spanish Islam*, pp. 242-249.

strides under Ibn Juljul and Abul Qasim (Al-bucasis), who was reckoned in the West the most eminent surgeon of the Middle Ages.

A study of the lives and activities of the learned men of the eleventh century reveals an astonishing vision of the intellectual fertility of the immediately preceding century.

Erroneous, then, is the complacent assumption of the West, that only on European soil did Islam really bear intellectual flower and fruit. On Asiatic soil, in the eastern part of the Empire, as a matter of fact, Islam reached its culminating point in arts and sciences.

For the reception of knowledge, no doubt, the soil of Cordova was exceedingly congenial. There, a consuming love for books and libraries was the striking characteristic of the people. The royal library consisted of 400,000 volumes. The rich vied with each other in the collection of books, and the upstart tried to go one better. Paper factories in Toledo and Xativa supplied writing-materials. Copyists were sought for in all parts of the world—even in remote Baghdad*—and book-binding became a thriving trade. The Byzantine Emperor could not think of a more pleasing gift for the great Abdur Rahman III † than a beautiful copy of the *Pharmaceutics of Dioscorides*," and, as then there was no one in Cordova who knew Greek, the learned monk Nicolas was sent with it to render it into Arabic.

How the Christian Nicolas, a devoted chemist and druggist, lived in closest friendship with the scholarly Jew Hasdai, and how the latter became all-powerful at the court of the Commander of the Faithful, testifies to the liberal and tolerant spirit of the age. In Cordova, for the first time, we

* Thafar Al-Baghdadi, the chief of the scribes of this time, came from Baghdad, and settled in Cordova. He was one of the many excellent scribes whom Al-Hakam kept in his pay, and who lived in that capital about the same time as Al-Abbas Ibn Omar As-Sikili (from Sicily), Yusuf Al-Bolutti, and their disciples. *Makkari*, Vol. II, p. 168.

† Dozy, *Spanish Islam*, pp. 445-447.

observe how the Arabs, by sheer superiority, extended and diffused their language. The patrician, Alvar of Cordova, complains that Christians read the poetry and romances of the Arabs; study the writings of their theologians and philosophers—indeed, all young people of talent know only the Arabic language; amass a large library at an enormous cost; and openly avow that this literature deserves administration and applause.*

Such was the state of Islamic culture, in its western centre, Cordova, at the beginning of the eleventh century. Then, suddenly, a revolution broke out. The bodyguards, consisting of slaves and Berbers, seized the helm of State. Throughout a 20 year's Civil War, Cordova was the apple of discord, and when, in 1031, Hisham III, the last of the Omayyads, renounced the throne, Cordova was half destroyed, impoverished, depopulated. The Moorish Empire now enters on its path of decline and fall. Separate dynasties—disunited and incapable of resisting the onward march of the Spanish Christians—rule in Saragossa, Seville, Granada, Malaga, Algiers, Badajoz, Valentia, Murcia. Politically tragic is the sight of the Moorish Empire gradually parting with limb after limb. But, for the culture of the West and of the entire East, this period is of special importance.

The Civil War scared the "savants" away from Cordova to other towns—to Seville, Granada, Toledo, etc. etc. For a short time Seville enjoyed considerable outward prosperity. Under the rule of the Abbadites the population rose to 400,000, and Seville played the role, which she has always played in Spain, of a joyous, pleasure-scattering city. Even at the time of the splendour of Cordova, it was said that books found the best market in Cordova, musical instruments

* Gibbon says that in 1039 "it was found necessary to transcribe an Arabic version of the Canons of the Council of Spain for the use of the Bishops and Clergy in the Moorish kingdoms." The version in question is dated 1049, and is inscribed "for the use of the most noble Bishop John Daniel" (*Casiri*, Vol. I, p. 54).

in Seville. Seville was, indeed, the centre of music and song and of all those gaieties which we associate with the Moors in the smiling plain of Andalusia. It was a city of the most beautiful gardens, and as such, its flower-shows were locally unrivalled. By grafting rose-slips on almond-trees, they obtained the famous " Seville Roses "—the last sweet memory of those far-off joyous days. The tendency to pleasure—characteristic of Seville—was specially encouraged by the fair sex—ever prolific in such devices. Thus, the favourite wife of the Abbadite Prince, Mutamid*—Itimad—seeing, one day, some country women selling milk and walking up to their ankles in mud, said to her husband, " I wish I and my slaves could do as those women are doing ! " Straightway Mutamid ordered a room in the palace to be strewn with a thick paste consisting of ambergris, musk, and camphor, dissolved in rose-water. He then had vessels made in imitation of milk-skins and slung on ropes of the finest silk ; and, with these on their arms, Itimad and her maidens splashed in the aromatic mess to their hearts' content.

In Seville lived the most gifted of the Moorish poets—no other than the prince Mutamid himself. While Seville thus light-heartedly abandoned herself to the joys of life, Toledo became the channel through which the treasures of Eastern erudition streamed into the West.

Just as, once, systematic translations brought home the ancient sciences of the West to the Arabs—so now the mediæval West, by the very same process of translation, appropriated the sciences of the Arabs.

We notice in the eleventh century the Carthaginian Constantino travelling for 30 years in North Africa and the Orient with a view to teaching Arabian medical science at Salerno† and to translating Arabic works into Latin when a monk at Monte Cassino.

*Dozy, *Spanish Islam*, pp. 670-78. See also Whishaw, *Arabic Spain*, pp. 213-15.

†" The medical school of Salerno was famous in mediæval history ; it

Adelard of Bath, too, in his travels in Asia, Egypt and Spain, studied the mathematical and astronomical works of the Arabs, with a view to translating them into Latin on his return home to England. To fill up the obvious gaps in the Western knowledge of philosophy the Archbishop of Toledo founded a school for translation, which, under the supervision of the Archdeacon Dominico Gondislavi, and, with the co-operation of the Hebrew, Johannes ben David (Hispalensis) in 20 years rendered into Latin all the older philosophy of the Arabs. In the Italian Plato of Tivoli and Gerard of Cremona, in the astrologer Friedrich II, in Michael Scotus, in Hermanus Allemanus (or Teutonicus), the thirteenth century found illustrious translators.*

The struggles of the Christian population of Spain with foreign masters who were enfeebled by culture and torn by dissensions, the gradual withdrawal of the Moors to the south, and the final shrinking of their Empire to the small kingdom

was founded neither by Charles the Great nor by the Arabs, the city never having been under the dominion of either Its origin is to be found in the Benedictine monastery of Salerno, established in 794, in which the botanical and the medical works of the ancients were studied. Its fame grew, when about the year 1070 the celebrated Constantino Africano took refuge there. He had studied in the schools of the Arabs at Babylon, at Baghdad, and in Egypt, and was presented by the brother of the Caliph of Babylon to Guissard, who took him as secretary. He gave a new impulse to philosophical and to medical studies by making known in the West the works of the Arabs. Roger I gave laws to the school of Salerno, which was the first Western school to introduce academic degrees. New regulations were established for it by Frederick II, who ordered that no one should practise medicine without being 'licensed' by that school, the fame of which waned after the fifteenth century through the competition of Naples. The school was suppressed in 1811, together with the University of Salerno."—*Catholic Encyclopædia*, *Sub.* '*Salerno*.'

*Wustenfeld, *Ubersetzungen arabischer Werke in das Lateinische*, the introduction, pp. 5-10. On Constantinus Africanus, pp. 10-11 ; Adelard of Bath, p. 20 ; Johannes Hispanus, p. 25; Gondislavi, p. 38 ; Plato of Tivoli, p. 39; Hermanus Dalmatia, p. 48; Gerard of Cremona, p. 54. Constantinus tells us that, in his time, there was a great deal of plagiarism and that to guard against it he put his name to his writings. Not so Gerard who, from sheer modesty, would not put his name to his translations and whose works, therefore, had to be known through his friends, p. 56.

of Granada, did not interfere with, much less end, the intellectual contact between the two great rival religions of the world. With every fresh Christian conquest of the Islamic centre of learning new treasures, in the shape of books, came into Christian hands. Nor were these books allowed to remain on their shelves unread—their study was enthusiastically encouraged by the Christian kings of Castille.

But while the Christian West not only accepted but extended and developed the Muslim sciences that came into its hands, there was yet one aspect of Muslim culture which it left comparatively neglected and unexplored—Arab art.

In this sphere, however much may have perished, or survived in sad decay, the remnants, in their totality, constitute the best and the most infallible index of the growth, expansion, and changing attitude of the Arab mind in the nine centuries of its political ascendancy in Islam.

Perhaps with the sole exception of Yemen, the Arabs, when they made their appearance in world-history, possessed no art. The simple, formless, cube-shaped Ka'ba—with its gods and oblations—was naught but a standing witness to the utter impotence of the Arabs in the domain of the plastic arts and architecture. Even needs connected with religious worship, which Islam pressed home early in its career, or in those of its successors, did not lead to artistic creations in Arabia with or without foreign aid. The first mosque of Islam* in Medina was only a four-cornered courtyard such as every Arab household of any pretension possessed. It was but a space set apart for reception and gathering (*majlis*). There was nothing there to indicate any intention regarding, or to suggest any desire for the erection of, a special place for common worship of Allah, or to embellish it with any special adornment in His honour and for His glory. The two outstanding features were the courtyard shape of the structure

*Muir, *Life of Mohamed*, Vol. III, pp. 18-21.

and studious care taken when fixing the direction of prayer; and *these* features of the first mosque remained for a century the characteristic features of the religious art of the Islamic Empire.

It is all the more amazing—if the Arabs, at the time of Mohamed, were lacking in artistic sense—to find them, in the course of their conquests, anxious to spare and preserve the artistic monuments of the past and even ready to share with the Christians their beautiful places of worship for devotional purposes.

We must not forget that their wars were religious wars and their goal the triumph of Islam! Eventually, then, the view gained ground that a place of worship was a House of Allah, and, as such, should be superbly equipped. Here, in this view, lay the germ of the religious art of Islam.

It was but natural that the architectural and decorative forms of art which henceforward greeted their gaze day by day in the Christian Churches of Damascus and Jerusalem, nay, even in distant Cordova, should appear to them as the final consummation of all human art. Nor was it at all strange or unexpected that, under the influence of the models before them at Ctesiphon, Damascus and Cordova, Muslim art should make a beginning and develop in diverse ways. But remarkable, to be sure, is the great influence which Islam itself exerted upon Muslim art.

Though unable to achieve anything on their own initiative, and dependent entirely on the genius of the people of other faiths in the domain of art, the Muslim employers yet succeeded in weaving Eastern and Western art into a new unity, and in giving to this creation—the outcome of selection and combination—a characteristic impress of their own. This new art thus owes its birth as much to the taste of the Arab employers—though difficult it is to assess their share—as to the co-operation of the Persian, Byzantine and Coptic

craftsmen.*

Of this the Amr Mosque in Cairo† offers the earliest proof. Even before the Church of St. John at Damascus was transformed into a pure mosque—even before the "rocky dome" arose on the holy rocks of Jerusalem—under the first Governor (Amr Ibn al-As), was built in the south of old Cairo a mosque the scanty remains of which betray the interplay of distant influences.

From Persian and Greek buildings columns were collected, and, without regard to uniformity or size, were untilized in the formation of arcades according to the style of Medina. The plan represented a quadrangle; a main hall, surrounded by six rows of columns, and with a wall indicating the direction in which Mekka was situated (*qibla*), constituted the front entrance—while halls with three aisles formed the right and left enclosures of the courtyard. The arches exhibited a

*On the influence of the Copts on Muslim Art, see Chapter VII of Whishaw's *Arabic Spain*.

†"Amr Mosque was originally a very plain oblong room, about 200 feet long by 56 wide, built of rough brick, unplastered, with a low roof supported probably by a few columns, with holes for light. There were no minarets, no niche for prayer, no decoration, no pavement. Even the pulpit which Amr set up was removed when the Caliph wrote in reproach: 'It is not enough for thee to stand whilst the Muslims sit at thy feet.' For it was the duty of the conqueror to recite the prayers and preach the Friday Sermon in this humble building. It soon became too small for the growing population of Fustat, and was enlarged in 673 by taking in part of the house of Amr; and at the same time, raised stations—the germ of the minaret—were erected at the corners for the Muezzins to recite the call to prayer. Twenty-five years later the entire mosque was demolished by a later governor, who rebuilt it on a larger scale. So many and thorough have been the repairs and reconstructions that there is probably not a foot of the original building now in existence. What we see today is practically the mosque rebuilt in 827 by Abdullah Ibn Tahir, and restored by Murad Bey in 1798 just before he engaged the French in the battle of the Pyramids at Embaba. It is four times the size of the original mosque, and different in every respect . . . . In the early part of the nineteenth century it was still a favourite place of prayer for the people of Cairo on the last Friday of the Fast of Ramadan." See Corbett's essay on *The History of the Mosque of Amr at Old Cairo* in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, N.S. xxii, 1891; Lane, *Cairo Fifty Years Ago*, pp. 142-143; Apud Stanley Lane-Poole, *Story of Cairo*, pp. 42-44.

variable character—the oldest were imitations of the Christian basilicas, and yet samples of the pointed arch were not absent in the oldest structures. The material originally consisted of sundried bricks. That in the first century of Islam, no Arab architect could erect such a building, is understandable; and the report, therefore, that it was the work of a Christian convert to Islam—a Copt—is by no means incredible.* But, that notwithstanding—no less perceptible is the influence of the Arab mind here. The columns in the Arab architecture play a new role—construction is subordinated to ornamentation. No longer the form and harmony but the number and arrangement of the columns now assume importance. In a Christian edifice columnation serves the purpose of relieving the heaviness of the divisions between the longitudinal aisles. The Arab did not quite realize the true purpose of the columns, but used them to express the ancient appreciation of "immensity" and "fulness." Thus the number of columns in the Amr Mosque must have been more numerous than the number of days in the year. The aisles did not run at right angles, but parallel, to the wall indicating the *qibla*. The place of the few long aisles of the basilica was taken by numerous (in one case 26!) short aisles of the wall of the mosque. The optical effect was diametrically

*The Arabs have never been artists or even skilled craftsmen. They imported Persians and Greeks to build for them and decorate their houses and mosques, but above all they employed the Copts, who have been the deft workmen of Egypt through thousands of years of her history. A comparison of the plaster-work of Ibn Tulun with the Coptic carvings preserved in the Cairo Museum of Antiquities and those from the tomb of Ayn-es-Sira in the Arab Museum shows clearly the source of the floral decoration, which belongs to the Byzantine School of Syria and Egypt. The Kufic inscriptions carved in the solid wood are a purely Arab addition, and one that afterwards developed into a leading decorative feature in Saracenic art. The geometrical ornament of the pen grilles is also Byzantine, as A Bourgouin has established in his exhaustive treatise on the *entrelacs*, but it is not certain that they belong to the original building, and the star polygons suggest that the grilles may have been part of the latter restoration.—Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, pp. 85-86. For further information see Rivoira's *Moslem Architecture*, p. 23 *et seq*.

opposite to that produced by the basilica. Whilst the Byzantine model forcibly directed the eye to the mighty apse by its longitudinal nave—the columns of the mosque seemed to impart to the prayer-niche (*mihrab*—a diminutive apse, commonly employed in the second century of Islam) an unexpected significance.

The tendency to a confusing plethora of mystical forms in art remained for centuries the striking feature of the mosque, and this in spite of the fact that its plan and execution at the time, were in the hands of the Byzantine artists, till then noted for their clearness and neatness in design, execution and ornamentation.

In the west of the Islamic Empire Arab artistic taste seems to have approximated to that of Byzantium.* Evidences of this were particularly noticeable in the religious buildings of Algeria, Morocco and Spain. The prototype is the venerable mosque of Kairwan—the so-called Sidi-Uqba Mosque. Founded about the middle of the first century (670 A.D.) by the celebrated conqueror of Africa—Uqba Ibn Nafi—destroyed and reconstructed by the destroyer of Carthage, Hasan Ibn Numan (703 A.D.)—repeatedly reconstructed and repaired in the course of the following centuries—the mosque has yet retained a great deal of its original character.

Thus, for instance, the ground-plan dates from the first century of Islam, and reveals the same resemblance to a forest of columns as in the Amr Mosque. But through the middle of this forest of columns, which divides the space into eight transverse or 17 longitudinal aisles, there runs a central nave at right angles to the *mihrab*—each end of which is crowned by a cupola. This necessitated the making of the transverse aisles as broad and high as the central nave itself. The result is, the ground-plan assumes the form of a T, which becomes

*See chapter on *Byzantine Art*, pp. 75-97, in Roth's *Sozial und Kulturgeschichte des Byzantinischen Reiches*.

more pronounced by the doubling of the columns, exactly as in the ancient Christian churches ; for instance, in " San Paolo Fuori Le Mura " in Rome, and in the " Church of the Nativity " at Bethlehem. In spite of its strong affinity with the old Christian prototypes, the general aspect of the mosque is entirely original. The whole courtyard, surrounded by columns, is an inheritance from Medina ; a three-storied four-sided minaret, on the side of the courtyard opposite to the entrance of the mosque, reminds us, by its massiveness, of the time when the rule of Islam rested on its military strength ; the enclosing walls of the immense structure, with its gateways crowned by cupolas, its four-sided projecting towers and its supporting pillars, appear to be imitations of the royal palaces of Kuyunjik and Khorasabad.

In the Sidi-Uqba Mosque we have an opportunity, for the first time, of beholding the ornamentation of the prayer-niche in its earliest stage. It is yet possible, however, to see the outlines of the oldest unadorned *mihrab*. Close by it lies a later prayer-niche dating from A.D. 857 : into a wall lined with faience is sunk a round-arched niche, covered with inlaid marble, and flanked by two columns with Byzantine capitals. The surface-ornamentation of the *mihrab* is yet predominantly Byzantine, but, half-way up, is seen a scroll, which reveals to us the Arab's pleasure in the contemplation of the Arabic characters—as strong now as it has ever been in the past—and explains the use of these characters in surface-decoration. The revered pulpit (*mimbar*) of plane-tree wood—one of the most precious treasures of the mosque—shows, in its perforated carvings, geometrical ornamentations of Byzantine inspiration —suggesting, at the same time, the beginnings of an effort to step beyond the Byzantine lead.

With the consideration of the *mimbar*, however, we have progressed right up to the end of the ninth century. We must now revert to the eighth century to make acquaintance with Muslim art in Spain.

In addition to the works of art which the conquerors came to know in Mesopotamia, in Syria, in North-Western Africa, and which they adopted as their models—on Spanish soil a new influence came into play; namely, that of Visigothic art, which, just about the time of the Arab invasion, was at its very height.* Nor is the Berber influence—though difficult to assess—to be ignored. The art to which so many different factors contributed could not but follow its own special line of development on the western borders of the Empire.

The Great Mosque of Cordova†—representing as it does the most diverse influences—is the earliest example of this art. The ancient world supplied its many hundred columns; Byzantium provided it with surface-decoration; Spanish Visigothic art shaped its architectural structure. It took two centuries to complete this gigantic edifice, which, on its completion, stood out as supremely beautiful; nay, unique and unexcelled.

Throughout its length are horse-shoe arches, over an immense forest of low columns. From the columns rise pillars, higher than the columns themselves, supporting the beams. Round arches, over-topped in turn by horse-shoe arches, connect the pillars. No ornamentation other than an alternation of white and red colouration characterises the building.

The Past and the Present, Christianity and Islam, *all* helped in the creation of such a work! The pillars are mostly pillars obtained from ruined Roman temples; the capitals are imitations of the Corinthian capitals; the horse-shoe arch, a fellow-traveller of the Arabs from Persia to the West. The *mihrab*, the pearl of that mosque, owes its exquisite ornamentation to a Byzantine artist. A Slav, Abu Jafar As-Sakalabi,

*See Appendix, note to Chapter I, p. 381 *et seq.* in Whishaw's *Arabic Spain* where this subject has been admirably discussed.

†Makkari, Vol. I, p. 217.

superintended most of the construction. But, all this notwithstanding, the general effect is purely Arabian.

It is the realization in stone of the ideal beauty which everywhere greets us in that ancient typically Arab form of poetry—*Qasida.*

Just as, in these poems, verse upon verse is strung without any central unity—just as the ear listens tensely to their enchanting diction and rhythm—just as the mind is bewildered in the contemplation of the details and the yet smaller and smaller details, rising only occasionally to seize upon a new idea or an image—so here also in the case of the Mosque of Cordova.

In its entirety it is something immense, something incomprehensible. The mind is impressed, not so much by the width as by the depth of the view. The pious Muslim turns his face to the *mihrab*, and sees it covered with bewildering arabesques. Eye and mind are more and more lost in the details, until some alluring verse from the Qur'an, usually of profound significance, rescues the spectator from his perplexing distractions. This is the Arab ideal of beauty which from the beginning was striven for throughout the Empire, and which in the succeeding centuries found its perfect expression there where foreign influences interfered least with its own special development in the West.

After the middle of the ninth century A.D. Art begins to assume a different character in different parts of the Empire.

In India and Persia the influences of the older monuments and of the peoples were so great that Islamic art there received the impress of both nations. In the centre of the Empire, in Syria and Egypt, the influences of the country, of the Seljukian East and of the Moorish West, combined to create a Syro-Egyptian style. In North-West Africa and in Southern Spain the art of the Arabs and Berbers—in many ways akin to each other—influenced little from without—developed the so-called Moorish or Maghribi style.

Andalusia was really the home and hearth of this style. From there it passed on to North Africa. In Spain, with the exception of the Mosque of Cordova, all later monuments of religious art have perished. For the flower and fruit of Maghribi art we must turn to an outlying, little-known place on the eastern border of Morocco—to the townlet of Tlemcen and its neighbourhood—where we find them in rich abundance. Amidst endless wars, and under princes of different houses—Almoravid, Almohades, Abdul Wadites, Merinides, Zajjanides—who fought and succeeded each other—there rose buildings which have ever since attested the artistic efforts and the actual capacities of the Moors from the twelfth to the fifteenth century A.D. Under the Almoravids was built the Great Mosque (1135-38) which shows the advance the Moors made in the domain of architecture. The round columns are replaced by quadrangular pillars and the horse-shoe by cusp arches.

The charming little mosque of Sidi Bel Hassan—a creation of the Abdul Wadites—shows us the decorative art of the Moors at its height at the end of the thirteenth century. The Byzantine influence has vanished, and no other foreign influence is discernible. The leaf-work—originally of acanthus and palm—is reduced to fanciful geometrical forms. The tendrils cross and intertwine, and with plant-ornamentation, mingles a new decorative element—the script, which gradually assumes a liane-like character. Several layers of these lace-pattern drawings are imposed one upon another without confusion. Each design retains its peculiar character from one end to the other, while, underneath, the script manifests itself in perfect distinctness. This—the so-called Kufic script—has here reached its highest elegance. Sometimes it constitutes the centre of an arabesque which twines round it—at others it forms the straight-point of the tendrils—or again it serves as a border of ever-repeated elements. In the formation of plant, script and geometrical ornamentations Islamic art found a new

expression for its inherent tendency—the "combination of delicate sense-impression with conceptions of the mind." The plant became a geometrical "motiv"; the script a plant-like ornamentation—the boldest fancy in concert with the soberest calculation succeeded in producing a remarkable kind of surface-decoration which has always been the wonder of the West. In the "Mudejar" style it was attempted in Spain, but beyond Spain it never travelled, for it was essentially Oriental in its cast and tone.*

How great the influence of mathematics was on Islamic art is seen in each object with which that art busied itself! Thus we observe in the *mihrab*—which from the very beginning was ornamented with all possible care—how the original parallel lines of the frontal arch of the niche appear, in later times, as the peripheries of two circles with superimposed centres. The stereotyped structural parts of the frontal arch which pointed towards a centre lying along a line joining the two upper ends of the supporting columns, become in later times a point lying midway between the centres of the two constituent circular arches.

And quite as much fancy and calculation were bestowed upon another part of the mosque which has become in its own way a characteristic feature of the Moorish style—the minaret. Originally an imitation of the light-house of Alexandria, the Maghribian minaret has almost everywhere retained its four-cornered shape. A little tower—a terminal turret on the platform of the four-cornered tower—reminiscent of the ancient *ziggurat* of Babylonia—can still be seen in the minarets of the Great Mosque of Samarra and those of the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo. The extended plane-surfaces of the minarets

* The meaning of the word *Mudejar*, as given in the *Dict. Acad.*, is a Mohamedan who after the surrender of a place remained, without changing his religion, a vassal of the Christian kings. It is derived from an Arabic word meaning tributary. The dictionary gives no explanation of it as a term of art. See Whishaw, *Arabic Spain*, Introduction.

gave to Moorish art its first impulse towards external decoration. The walls of the tower were covered with a network of ribs of sundried bricks, and were ornamented by blind arches with delicate little pillars, and by windows, loggias and lisenas; while the terminal turrets were enlivened by a lining of many-coloured faience.

There were not very many means which appealed to the Moorish taste for external decoration. And yet, by well-considered selection and arrangement of what they had, the Moors managed to make minaret towers of imposing massiveness at Mansura; of proud splendour in Marrakesh; the Hasan tower in Rabat, and the Giralda of Seville, noted for its unexcelled grace and elegance.

For centuries the minarets had been the only part of the external structure of the mosque suggesting the artistic splendour of the interior. As an additional exterior feature the highly-decorated entrance-gate comes in the fourteenth century.

In the Mosque of Sidi Bu Medin which stands south-west of Tlemcen on a mountain slope, such an entrance-gate or portal is found. Its splendour compels us to assume that this classical work was preceded by many previous attempts in that direction. In the midst of a framework of arabesques, inscriptions, geometrical ornamentations, and sweet little brackets, a gigantic horse-shoe arch leads to a richly-adorned hall. Eleven steps conduct one to the huge wings of the door made of cedar-wood—the inlaid bronze therein uniting all that art and artists could create in that age. Thus, though late in point of time, the art of Maghrib happily added exterior to interior decoration. This new activity manifests itself in the many-coloured mosaic-work and in the amazing proportion of their design. The joy in the general effect led to a neglect of ornamental details. Overladen with surface-decorations, cut into a lining of gypsum, the interior of the Mosque of Sidi Bu Medin shows that the culminating point of artistic taste had been passed. But artistic creations did not yet quite cease.

They continued for centuries—Spain furnishing an example of the later art of mosque-building.

We must now turn from the West to Egypt—the then centre of the Islamic Empire—to study in its surviving monuments the development of its religious architecture, and to compare it with those of the West. Three architectural monuments will suffice to bring home to us the characteristics of Egyptian art.

The Ahmad Ibn Tulun Mosque, dating from the ninth century A.D. (878)—compared with the Mosque of Cordova shows the difference between the Egyptian and the Maghribi style at the earlier period.* The Mosque of Sultan Hassan

* "Two features specially distinguish this mosque. It was built entirely of new materials, instead of the spoils of old churches and temples, and it is the earliest instance of the pointed arch throughout a building, earlier by at least two centuries than any in England. They are true pointed arches, with a very slight return at the spring, but not enough to suggest the horse-shoe form . . . the use of brick arches, and piers, instead of marble columns, was due partly to the Emir's reluctance to deprive the Christian churches of so many pillars, but even more to his anxiety to make his mosque safe from fire. . . Five rows of arches from the cloister at the Mekka or south-east side, and two rows on the other sides; arches and piers are alike coated with gypsum, and the ornaments on the arches and round the stone grilles or windows are all worked by hand in the plaster. The difference between the soft flexity of this work, done with a tool in the moist plaster, and the hard mechanical effect of the designs impre ssed with a mould in the Alhambra, is striking; it is the difference between the artist and the artisan. On the simple rounded capitals of the engaged columns built at the corner of each arch there is a rudimentary bud and flower pattern, and on either side of the windows between the arches facing the court, which also are pointed and have small engaged columns, is a rosette, and a band of rosettes runs round the court beneath the crenellated parapet. The inner arches are differently treated. Round the arches and windo ws runs a bud-like flower pattern, which also extends across from springto spring of the arches beneath the windows, and a band of the same ornamentation runs along above the arches, in place of the rosettes, which only occur in the face fronting the court; over this band, and likewise running along the whole length of all the inner arcades, is a Kufic inscription carved in wood, and above this is the usual crenellated parapet. The arcades are roofed over with sycamore-planks resting on heavy beams. In the rearmost arcade the back wall is pierced with pointed windows, which are filled, not with coloured glass, but with grilles of stone forming geometrical designs with central rosettes. The general form ofthe mosque is similar to that of Amr as restored, the form of every mosque in Cairo from

stands as a counterpart of the Mosque of Sidi Bu Medin, and the Kait-Bey Mosque reveals the last stage in the art of Egyptian mosque-building. The Tulun Mosque already shows the decline of the Byzantine and the predominance of the Mesopotamian influence. The pointed arch now dominates the entire structure, and extends not only over the pillars but also over the windows and the *mihrab*. The plant-decoration which runs as a border along the pillars and the arches, and the script ornamentation on sycamore-wood, contain the germ of the surface-decoration common to all Islamic architecture. The consistent and uniform use of the pointed arch and of the pillars conclusively proves the attention that was bestowed upon the constructive side of mosque-building in Egypt which is lacking in the Maghrib.

Although the immediate influence of Mesopotamia determined the character of the Ibn Tulun Mosque, we cannot explain the continuance of the pointed arch and its further development into keel-arch,* and the use of niches such as we find in the Mosque of Al-Azhar and other buildings of the Fatimide period, except upon the assumption of the direct

the ninth to the thirteenth century. . . . The *dome and minaret, so characteristic of later Cairo Mosques*, are here wanting. There is no dome, because the dome has nothing to do with prayer, therefore nothing to do with a mosque . . . only when there is a chapel attached to a mosque, containing the tomb of the founder or his family, is there a dome. . . . It happens, however, that a large number of mosques at Cairo are mausoleums, containing chambers with tombs of the founders, and the profusion of the domes to be seen, when one looks down upon the city from the battlements of the citadel, has brought about the not unnatural mistake of thinking that every mosque must have a dome. Most mosques with tombs have domes, but no mosque that was not intended to contain a tomb ever had one in the true sense. The origin of the dome may be traced to the cupolas which surmount the graves of Babylonia, many of which must have been familiar to the Arabs and still more to the Turks, who preserved the essentially sepulchral character of the form, and never used it, as did the Copts and the Byzantines, to say nothing of Western architects, for the purpose of roofing a church or its apse." Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, pp. 77-85. On the Mosque of Ibn Tulun, Rivoira, *Moslem Architecture*, pp. 138, 148; On Al-Azhar, p. 153.

*Keel-form, that is, two arcs terminating in tangential lines at each end.

influence of the immediate surroundings. Egypt, the ancient home of architecture and of proportion, could not but awaken in her foreign masters the sense of the overpowering beauty of a uniform style.* Much earlier than in the West, even under the Fatimides, an attempt was made in Egypt to adorn the exterior of the mosque.

Under the Ayyubides (1171-1250), by whom the destinies of Syria and Palestine were practically unified, the old Arab ground-plan of the mosque was completely replaced by a cross-shaped ground-plan. Moreover, in the mausoleum of the Fire-worshippers, with its dome-shaped roof, a new architectural style came into vogue.

While the adoption of the cupola—the elevation of which gradually passed from an elliptical into a pointed-arch form—was borrowed from the East; the task of finding a suitable transition from the quadrangular main building to the base of the cupola urged the builders on to introduce innovations. They erected on the square an octagon, on the octagon a 16-sided polygon, and on this polygon the cupola, with the result that the form thus obtained was suggestive of the stalactite. The stalactite, at the same time, appeared as an ornamentation of the niches. There has been much speculation as to whether the

*Stanley Lane-Poole in his *Cairo* (p. 227) tells us that three main features characterise Cairo buildings. The old mosques had no external decoration; their enclosing walls were plain, and only in the late Fatimide Mosque of El-Akmar do we find the beginning of a facade. The Mamluk Mosques, copying no doubt the buildings of the crusades in Palestine, generally present fine facades, with sunk panels, portals in recess, and decorative cornice and crown-work. The next characteristic is the development of the minaret, which becomes more graceful, is built of well-faced stone, and shows delicate articulations and gradations tapering from the square to the polygon and cylinder, with skilful use of "stalactite" or pendentive treatment of angles and transitions and supports for the balconies. The third is the construction of large domes. Hitherto small cupolas over the *mihrab*, or above the entrance, were the utmost achievements of the earlier architects. The feature of a great dome was introduced by Saladin's successors, for example, in the dome of the tomb-mosque of Al-Shafiy in the Karafa, and probably in other edifices, but too little remains of the Ayyubide period to permit of very exact definition. The Mamluks were dome-builders *par excellence.*

stalactite, and particularly the stalactite cupola, was borrowed from nature, or was founded on a mathematical basis. The predilection of the Arabs for solving ornamentational problems by means of geometry supports the latter theory, which receives yet additional weight from the fact that it was a universally approved style throughout the Islamic world.

Whencesoever the stalactite originated, it was a most precious accretion to Islamic art, and, like the arabesque, continued to be one of those peculiar decorative expedients of all times which, outside Islam's cultural sphere of influence, never received intelligent appreciation or acceptance. With the rise of the Mamluks, who ended the Ayyubide rule, a new era of power and glory dawned upon Egypt. By their union mosque and mausoleum received a powerful impetus to further development. The incorporation of the cupola into the mosque introduced a desire for sheer altitude and a prepossession for curves. The splendour of the age and the pride of the rulers led to ostentatious external ornamentations—*e.g.*, of the facade, the portal, and the minaret—the buildings erected under the Seljuks in Asia Minor serving as models. The first memorial of this style—the so-called Baherite style—is the Mausoleum Mosque of Sultan Hassan.*

*This mosque was built between 1356 and 1359 (A.H. 757-760). It is in the usual madrissa form—a cross consisting of a central court and four deep transepts or porticoes, while the founder's tomb may be compared to a lady-chapel behind the chancel or eastern portico. The outside does not of course reveal the cruciform character of the interior, since the angles are filled with numerous rooms and offices. The prevailing impression from without is one of great height, compared with other mosques. The walls are 113 feet high, are built of fine-cut stone from the pyramids, and have the peculiarity rare in Saracen architecture, of springing from a plain socle. Windows—two with horse-shoe arches; the rest simple grilles—slightly relieved the monotony of the broad expanse of wall; but the most beautiful feature is the splendid cornice, built up of six tiers of stalactites, each overlapping the one below, which crowns the whole wall. There are some graceful pilasters, or engaged columns, at the angles, and a magnificent portal in an arched niche, 66 feet high, vaulted in a half-sphere which is worked up to by twelve tiers of pendentives. Bold arabesque medallions and borders, geometrical panels, and corner columns with stalactite capitals, enrich this stately gate.

A large pointed-arch portal overladen with stalactite; a facade divided into storeys, and thereby appearing taller than was actually the case; and two minarets, 50 metres high, adorn the exterior of this mosque. Overpowering, indeed, is the impression made by the interior. From the portal one is led, through the vestibule, crowned by a splendid stalactite cupola (dome), and a long corridor, to a quadrangular courtyard, from which four aisles, with gigantic barrel-vaults, in pointed-arch profile, project. It is only from the open courtyard that dim light suffuses the open halls. Three of these halls are without any ornamentation, but the fourth—the southern one—facing Mekka—unites itself the whole of the decorative art of those times. There is the *mihrab*, lined with polychrome marble; mosaics cover the walls; and high up runs a frieze of inscriptions entwined with arabesques. To the elegance of the lines is added the effect of polychromy. Gold and azures, green, red, white and yellow are woven into inimitable harmony.

At the back of the *mihrab* open two huge folding doors—masterpieces of metal-work—into the space where, under a bold cupola, lies the tomb of the Sultan. The effect of proportion, within and without—the play of colours—the perfect taste shown in the ornamentations executed in stone, bronze, wood, plaster of Paris—make the Hassan Mosque the finest specimen of Syrian stone-style on the soil of Egypt, and a *chef-d'œuvre* of the fourteenth century Islamic art.

While in the Maghrib—so far as we can judge from the extant monuments—art had reached, about this time, its culminating point—in Egypt Islamic art, pressing its progressive course, attained its meridian glory a century later.

Islamic art found its supremest expression in the tomb-mosque of Kait-Bey.* Whatever the art of Islam matured in

*Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, p. 242 *et seq.*

"The Mosque of Hakim is almost the last of the new mosques on a grand scale, of quadrangular plan, with rows of columns, flat roofs, a

earlier times is here united with incomparable skill. The overpowering effect of the arches of comparatively large span—the view of the *mihrab* through such arches—the back walls with their pointed-arch windows and doors—the broad inscriptive frieze under a richly-carved and beautifully-

single dome in front of the *mihrab*, and sometimes a second rising above the central aisle, and a colonnaded court, the whole following the pattern of the prototype at Medina. From the second half of the tenth century onwards the trade of the East was, almost exclusively and on a great scale, carried on by the fleets of Venice, Pisa and Amalfi. These relations with the East intensified at a later date by the Crusades, were followed by the introduction in the East of types of sacred buildings which departed from the traditional pattern of Islam and exercised an undoubted influence on Moslem architecture. On the other hand, through the influence of the East, these relations gave rise to many wonderful cathedrals and abbeys; for it was by grafting the pointed arch of Islam on to the Lombardic vaulted basilica that the Transitional Style, from which the Pointed Style sprang, was inaugurated in Durham Cathedral (1093-1133). It was these relations, too, which inspired the parti-coloured facing of sacred buildings; for though the Romans had introduced it in walls and sometimes in arches, they used it only for constructional or economical purposes, whereas the East adopted it as a Christian fashion as well, first in churches and later in mosques. Its introduction into Italy was by way of Pisa, and was due to the Tuscans, who were the first to clothe the exteriors of churches with splendid marble inlays, and to enrich them with elaborate arcading. One of the earliest examples of the style is the Church of San Miniato al Monte near Florence, rebuilt about 1018, and probably finished about 1062. The older part of the facade (only the lower part of which goes back to the eleventh century, the upper evidently belongs to the twelfth and thirteenth), was copied by the architect of the front of the parish church of Empoli (1093). The decorative use of inlaid marbles was derived from the indigenous style of decoration in the interiors of late Roman and early Christian buildings, but in a different atmosphere it assumed a new and distinctive outward appearance. To all this may be added the unquestionable change both in architecture and art observable in the Seljuk period (1055-1300) under Central Asiatic influence. The flat-roofed mosque then assumed various forms. The true or false vault was introduced, the number of cupolas was increased, the principal dome obtained an elongated form, means were adopted to give greater importance to the facade, which was also brought into relation with the internal divisions of the building, and the architectural decoration became generally more extensive and varied. Under the influence of these ideas the minaret also started on a fresh career. It was originally a plain square tower, like those in Walid's mosques at Damascus and Medina, and in that of Bishr at Kairawan. The square form took deep root, so that in Spain it remained in vogue down to the end of the Muslim dominion. In the ninth century the square form was sometimes

coloured roof, point to a deliberate striving after a uniform effect of the whole which Islamic art in the West never attained to, even in conception. Both within and without, the Kait-Bey Mosque is a masterpiece of composition. Particular delicacy manifests itself in the loggia which occupies the corner of the upper storey above two grated windows of the ground-floor. The airy hall, with its pointed arches, on elegant pillars, is a *kuttab*, an elementary school, and behind the grated doors of the ground-floor, is a *sabil*; a public place for the supply of drinking water.

Just as Islam awakened the need for culture, and stimulated the sense of beneficence and shaped the entire public and private life of its followers—so also Islamic art, originating from the mosque, gradually included within its embrace the secular needs of public and private life. Unfortunately, few and inadequate are the remains of this art.

A Nilo-Meter* on the Island of Rhoda, near Cairo, with its walls adorned with niches and pillars, shows that even in the beginning of the eighth century secular art had begun its career.

combined with the cylindrical, by raising on a lofty four-sided basement a round tower with an external staircase winding round it. The union was effected in Mesopotamia, and the minaret of Samarra is an example of it on the grand scale. It did not enjoy a long or prosperous career in Egypt, nor did it spread thence to other countries. We know, for instance, that about the year 985 minarets were still being built in the square form. The Mesopotamian type, however, was the forerunner of the square-shaped minaret surmounted by a spiral cylinder with octagonal base, like the two ancient minarets in the Mosque of Hakim; and also of the other four with a square base supporting a spiral column—an early example of which is afforded by the minaret of Khosrugird near Sebzewar, in Persia. Apparently, in the eleventh century, in imitation of the minarets of the Mosque of Hakim, steps were taken towards emancipation from the traditional, universally-accepted square type of minaret, and there were substituted forms which gradually assumed varied and singular shapes: shapes which were sometimes thoroughly artistic and picturesque, but in other cases were quite extravagant; and the tendency was always towards greater and even excessive slenderness. See Rivoira, *Muslim Architecture*, pp. 168-177.

*Lane-Poole, *Cairo*, pp. 61, 85, 96.

Another such instance we have in a monument—the Muristan—dating from the thirteenth century. In 1285 Sultan Mansur Kalaun began, and in 1293 his son Nasir completed, an immense hospital. Round its quadrangular pillared courtyard were arranged in cruciform four high halls, of which one was set apart for the hospital staff, and the other three for the patients. The scanty remains of the interior—a couple of folding doors and a piece of wooden *plafond*—leave no doubt whatever that the entire art of that age was employed to make the stay of the patients there pleasant and cheerful. As in the palaces of princes, so here, rippling brooks meandered through every available space, and music played day by day. Here the first call to prayer was sounded two hours earlier than outside in the town, to make the night appear shorter to those that could not sleep. Whatever medical science could do to make residence in the hospital happy was done. Different diseases were treated in different wards. To the insane particularly pleasant apartments were allotted. The sick were lodged, as each case needed, in the southern or the northern portion of the hospital. They were artificially warmed or cooled, and special stress was laid on fresh air, for, said they, "man need eat from time to time only, but breathe always he must."

When we see art pressed into the service of humanity to such a high degree, we cannot doubt the report of the Arabs regarding the splendour and the outfit of the royal palaces. Our only regret is that of these much-praised palaces nothing has outlived the ravages of time. Not only in Egypt—even in North Africa and Spain also—political storms have swept almost all the secular buildings away. Of the famous castles of the Omayyads in Cordova nothing remains except the foundations, and some ruins of the residence of Abdul Rahman III, and of the Villa of the Wazir Mansur, which have recently been excavated. The palace of the Almohades in Seville—the Alcazar—was retouched in good time under

Christian rule. Only one Arab palace—the Alhambra of Granada—has come down to our time intact.*

What has been preserved of it dates from the fourteenth century, and shows Moorish art at its highest stage of development. In its oldest portion—Patio del Meruar—a comparatively high wall, with rich surface-decoration, dominates a small courtyard. But in the Court of Myrtles it is different: the solid tower of Comares—with its broad simple wall-surface—is the last symbol of Moorish martial prowess. The rest of the building, grouped round a rectangular pond, is expressive of the effort which signalised the last phase of Moorish art; namely, the complete abandonment of structural massiveness. The walls around are, according to our artistic instincts, surprisingly low. The shorter sides of the rectangle are resolved into delicate arcades whose elegant columns do not for one moment suggest the heavy weight of the arches and the walls resting upon them.

The Court of Myrtles leads to the Hall of the Ambassadors, which shows us, for the first time, the interior of a royal reception room in its full splendour. The multi-coloured and richly-decorated walls, the large niches in front of the double windows, and the high cupola of larch-wood make us forget that this charming, airy room is within the massive tower of Comares. But the Moors were not content with their victory over matter. It is only in the Court of the Lions, with its adjacent halls, that the highest ideal of their art is attained. The low side-walls are all transformed into arcades; each of the wall-surfaces, by means of its plaster carving, is, so to speak, converted into a carpet; the arches and the capitals of the columns are made parts of the surface-ornamentation, and the boundary between loads and their supports is for ever effaced.

Only the soft display of colours in the dim light reminds one that he is surrounded by solid walls. The endless

*Lane-Poole, *Moors in Spain*, p. 221.

repetition of the motto, "There is no conqueror save Allah," and of other graphic and geometrical ornamentations; the immense wealth of stalactite in ever-varying form, puzzle rather than enrapture us.

The latest and ripest fruit of the Moorish artistic sense is more calculated to inspire admiration than to contribute to our enjoyment. The wealth of surface-decoration seems but poor compensation for the absence of plastic art; and for this we hold the religion of Islam responsible. But we are wrong. Recent excavation work on the desert-palaces of Kusair Amra and Meschatta discloses Islam, in the earliest times, under the Omayyads, as unable to check the artistic representation of living beings. In Egypt men and animals are depicted in the wood-carvings of Muristan. We also know that in the palaces of the Fatimides animals of all kinds formed part of the designs on carpets and vessels.

Persia never stayed her hand from representing living beings. The Islam of today has quickly come to terms with photography and portrait-painting, and recently even with statues in bronze. Even Alhambra did not dispense with human figures. The representation of the "ten kings" and the hunting and tournament scenes in the room next to the *Salle de la Justice* have long been known. Some years ago, under the plaster wainscoting of the walls in the *Torre de las Damas*, a large number of figures of Arabs was discovered.

If the plastic arts did not play a great part in Alhambra or in the art of Islam it was not due to any religious scruples, but to the absence of all need for such activities.

The Court of Lions in the Alhambra, with its private rooms of the Caliph, all around, reveals to us the Moorish ideals of art and of living at the highest point of their culture. "In art, the ideal was the spiritualisation of matter—in life, renunciation of the world." It is no mere accident that the best and finest rooms of the Alhambra face the northern half of the hill whence (even before the buildings of Charles V) no

good view could be obtained of the indescribable natural scenery of the south, or of the snow-capped slopes of the Sierra Nevada. In planning these rooms the Moors paid no attention to the surrounding prospect. To them admission into the house meant withdrawal from the world. Therefore all the rooms round the Court of the Lions only reveal the enchanting view of the bizarre fountain through a forest of pillars. The courtyard lets in air and light, which lift the gloom and relieve the oppression of the dwelling apartments—*illumining* at the same time the pillars and the stalactites. No high wall, no vault, no smooth surface oppresses or cramps—no form, no colour, no inscription mars the effect of the whole. The monotony of the colours, of the lines, of the purling stream evokes that mentality which the pious Muslim feels and strives after even today; for it serves to withdraw him from the world, and to bring him nearer unto God.

Thus, in the highest form of Islamic art, we encounter once again the ideals which a thousand years before floated before the Arabs in their ancient homeland, and which they carried, on their conquering campaigns, to distant lands—an airy, shady roof by a purling stream and the monotony of the steppe or the desert behind the luxuriance of oasic vegetation. According to the unanimous report of travellers this monotony of colour and of line and this hushed silence are best calculated to attune the mind to a state of inexpressible composure.

When we compare the chambers of the Alhambra with the castles and palaces of the Christian West, we are struck by a significant difference. "In Islam temporal art took the place of religious art."

The small mosque of the Alhambra lags in splendour far behind the other rooms there. In the West, however, art always remained at the service of the Church. The palaces were dark and crude compared with the churches. And yet

in the few bold lines of the mediæval castles lay a force and power unsuspected and long unrevealed. No wonder, then, that a culture which perhaps expressed the finest forms of the art of living, and yielded in turn to their enfeebling, sapping influences, gave way at last to the unbroken strength of nations with fewer wants and greater powers of endurance.

Since the fall of Granada (1492) Moorish culture has receded to North Africa, and has there slowly languished. But its germs are still instinct with life, and hold out the promise of a second awakening.

APPENDIX
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Reference may also be made here to the *Encyclopædia of Islam*—a monument of international co-operation and scholarship, and to Prof. Browne's *Literary History of Persia*, which includes within its embrace the entire history of Islam in its manifold aspects. Nominally a history of Persian Literature—it is an imperishable record of Islam's enduring gifts to humanity.

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